A CHEKHOV

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

Edited with an Introduction
BY
Dr. MONA ABOUSENNA

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BEING AND CONSCIOUSNESS IN "THE CHERRY ORCHARD"

Individual versus Society

In a letter to Nemirovich-Danchenko, the co-founder of the Moscow Art Theatre with K.S. Stanislavsky, Chekov wrote about **The Cherry Orchard** :

> What's this in your telegram about the play being full of people crying ? Where are they ? Varya's the only one, but that's because Varya's a cry-baby by nature, and her tears shouldn't depress the audience. You'll often find the stage directions 'through tears' in my text, but that only shows the **mood** of the characters and not their tears.(1)

In another letter to Olga Knipper, the actress at the Moscow Art Theatre whom he married later, Chekov wrote after the performance of **The Cherry Orchard** :

> Why do they so obstinately call my plays a 'drama' in play-bills and newspaper advertisements ? What Nemirovich and Stanislavsky see in my play definitely isn't what I wrote and I'm

> ready to swear anything you like that neither of them has read through my play carefully once. I'm sorry to say so, but I assure you I'm right. (2)

In an earlier letter to the same person Chekov had been complaining about Stanislavsky's direction and acting (as Gayev), and stated emphatically : "The only thing I can say is that Stanislavsky has ruined my play." (3) This situation of misunderstanding or misinterpretation was not the first, for it had occured with the performance of Chekov's first play, **The Seagull,** on 17 October, 1896 at the Alexandrinsky Theatre in Petersburgh, and was now being repeated with his last play that was performed on 17 January, 1904.

The inevitable question now is :

Why should such misinterpretation persist from the beginning to the end of Chekov's career, and wherein does it lie ?

To answer that basic question one would have to identify the specifity of the two plays which caused the misinterpretation, **The Seagull** and **The Cherry Orchard,** since they represent the pivotal issues in Chekov's dramatic world which exhibit his creative originality.

In The Seagull, Treplev, the young rebellious artist and playwright, condemns the current naturalist theatre of his day :

> I regard the stage today as mere routine and prejudice. When the curtain goes up and the gifted beings, the high priests of the sacred art, appear by electric light, in a room with three sides to it, representing how people eat, drink, love, walk, and wear their jackets ; when they strive to squeeze out a moral from the flat vulgar pictures and the flat vulgar phrases, a little tiny moral, easy to comprehend and handy for home consumption; when in a thousand variations they offer me always the same thing over and over again—then I take to my heels and run, as Maupassant ran from the Eiffel Tower, which crushed his brain by its overwhelming vulgarity We must have new formulas. That's what we want. And if there are none, then it's better to have nothing at all.(3)

Although on first impression one would argue that Chekov's view about the art of theatre is represented in the play by Trigorin rather than by Treflev, the above passage definitely reflects a direct and bitter attack against what Brecht later called "naturalistic illusio-

nism". Such attack expresses the author's dissatisfaction with the state of naturalistic theatre of his time and an ambition to transcend it to something more substantial, more realistic.

The question then is :

Did Chekov achieve his ambition in **The Cherry Orchard ?**

To answer that question it should be noted first that the two pivotal issues which **The Seagull** and **The Cherry Orchard** represent imply the problem, i.e. naturalism, and the solution, namely "the play of mood." To identify the problem, we refer to naturalism as a literary form defined by Emile Zola in **Naturalism in the Theatre** in which he heralded the advent of a theatre that would :

> ...overthrow the accepted conventions and finally install the real human drama in place of the ridiculous untruths that are on display today... that would scorn the tricks of the clever hack, smach the imposed patterns, remake the stage until it is continuous with the auditorium, giving a shiver of life to the painted trees, letting in through the backcloth the great, free air of reality. (4)

Prognosticating about the new human drama which he called "naturalism", Zola wrote :

> The future is with naturalism. The formula will be found : it will be proved that there is more poetry in the little apartment of a bourgeois than in all the empty, worm-eaten palaces of history; in the end we will see that everything meets in the real, lovely fantasies that are free of capriciousness and whimsy, and idylls, and comedies, and dramas. Once the soil has been turned over, the task that seems alarming and unfeasible today will become easy. (5)

Indicating the path which this futuristic theatre ought to follow, Zola continues :

> In effect, the great naturalistic evolution, which comes down directly from the fifteenth century to ours has everything to do to the gradual substitution of physiological man for metaphysical man. In tragedy metaphysical man, man according to dogma and logic, reigned absolutely. The body did not count; the soul was regarded as the only interesting piece of human machinery; drama took place in the air, in pure mind... the play was heard out as if it were a

> school essay or a law case; it was on a higher plane that man, in the world of ideas, so far away from real man that any intrusion of reality would have spoiled the show. Such is the point of departure—in the Mystery plays, the religious point; the philosophical point in tragedy. And from that beginning natural man, stifling under the rhetoric and dogma, struggled secretly, tried to break free, made lenghty, futile efforts, and in the end asserted himself, limb by limb. The whole history of our theatre is in this conquest by the physiological man, who emerged more clearly in each period from behind the dummy of religious and philosophical idealism. Corneille, Moliere, Racine, Voltaire, Beaumarchais and, in our day, Victor Hugo, Emile Augier, Alexandre Dumas fils, even Sardou, have had only one task, even when they were not completely aware of it : to increase the reality of our corpus of drama, to progress towards truth, to sift out more and more of the natural man and impose him on the public. And inevitably, the evolution will not end with them. It continues; it will continue forever, Mankind is very young.(6)

tyan, on the other hand, maintains that :

> 'Naturalism' as a dramatic convention should be distinguished from 'realism', the content of the drama (because) we should not confuse the concept of naturalism borrowed from criticism of the nineteenth century post-Darwinian novel. In this concept, 'naturalism' is used to describe an historical purpose, revealing factors of environment acting upon human life (education, poverty, riches) and biology (heredity, sexual differences and needs. This concern does not necessarily affect the style and experience of the work. (7)

In this sense, naturalism, according to Styan, does not necessarily imply realism. Implicit in Styan's argument is an agreement with Brecht that naturalism is "illusionism", i.e. a distortion of reality with the purpose of concealing rather than presenting the truth of life. For he states clearly that "naturalistic drama is a fine contradiction in terms, since drama can never reproduce life with complete fidelity."(8) Having reached the conclusion that "the stage must always supply meaning and form to what is otherwise meaningless and formless, and it does this knowing that we are quite willing to be cheated,"(9) Styan coins the term "realistic naturalism," joining them thus in a unity. However, the nature of this unity is not dialectical but formal. The result is the

mutual exclusion of both, that is, the one "realism" cancels out the other "naturalism."

Realism is defined by Ian Watt as an epistemological problem dealing with the correspondence between the literary work and the reality which it imitates. Such correspondence is determined by what Watt calls the "general temper of realist thought, the methods of investigation it has used and the kinds of problems it has raised."(10) By the "general temper" of realism Watt means two major aspects : critical thinking and individualism. He states :

> The general temper of ... realism has been critical, anti-traditional and innovating; its method had been the study of the particulars of experience by the individual investigator, who, ideally at least, is free from the body of past assumptions and traditional belief... (11)

The unifying element between the individual and critical thinking is the scientific method whereby man applies his critical faculty logically and independently from tradition of past thought. Hence, the individual experience of objective reality was placed at the centre and became the pivot round which thought revolved.

Thus, the source of the naturalistic vision is related to the rise of modern development of science in Europe since the early seventeenth century culminating in scientific discoveries of the nineteenth. Thus, Chekov's reading of Darwin and his training in the medical profession, indicate his sense of and attitude towards reality. In a letter of 1899 to a biographer Chekov wrote: "Familiarity with natural sciences and the scientific method has always kept me on my guard, and wherever possible I have tried to write on the basis of scientific data; where it was impossible, I preferred not to write."(12)

If this is the case with the scientific basis of naturalism, where does individualism, which concerns the subjective aspect of naturalism fit into such worldview ?

The answer to this question is provided by Ibsen who, in conceiving and constructing his plays had declared that the individual had always been in the foreground:

> Before I write down one word, I have to have the character in mind through and through. I must penetrate into the last wrinkles of his soul. I always proceed from the individual; the stage setting, the dramatic ensemble, all of that comes naturally and does not cause me any worry, as soon as I am certain of the individual in every

> aspect of his humanity. But I have to have his exterior in mind also, down to the last button, how he stands and walks, how he conducts himself, what his voice sounds like. Then I do not let him go until his fate is fulfilled.(13)

Chekhov, having declared that "Ibsen is my favourite,"(14) in a letter to A.S. Vishnevsky, the critic cannot overlook the close affinity between the leader of dramatic realism, and Chekov, the pioneer of naturalism as has become the common view. The extreme interest that Chekov took in constructing his characters, whether on paper or on the stage, demonstrates the vital importance of emphasizing what he called the "mood" of the characters. Hence, for Chekov the core of individualism is the individual, and the individual is reduced to a specific psychological state, which he calls "mood". However, such psychological mood is not always isolated from the natural, material, physical environment out of which it emerged. Hence, it would be wrong to assume that Chekov's method of presenting his individual characters is ontological or phenomenological; it is in the first place historical with psychosocial dimensions.

This method of presentation, which constitutes the naturalism of Chekov's drama, is a surpassing of Aristotelian drama. Aristotle places the emphasis on

the imitation of action, for according to him, "the action and the fable are the end of tragedy and in everything the end is of principal importance."(15) This end which action is supposed to imitate, Aristotle defines as "the supreme good itself, the very end of life."(16) Hence, fable, imitation of action, and supreme good, which constitute the essence of Aristotle's conception of the tragic vision, are supreseded and negated by Chekov's dramatic worldview. This supersession negates the tragic vision in its essential dimension, namely, the ethical which Aristotle has described in the term "supreme good" and which, according to him, determines people's actions within two ethical categories which are religiously based, i.e. good and evil. For Chekov, the starting point is not ethics but concrete people living in concrete social-historical situations to which they react psychologically. He does this by giving presedence to character over action, that is, by reducing ethics to psychology that is deeply rooted in sociology. By so doing, Chekov de-mythologizes the illusion of the good and evil. This explains the absence of a protagonist in **The Cherry Orchard** and in most of his other plays. It is also the reason behind his non-tragic vision which has produced a dialectical admixture of comedy "lapsing every now and then into farce" as he himself called **The Cherry Orchard.**

If tragedy is a means of consolidating the status quo through the preservation of its social and artistic values, comedy—and Chekovian comedy in particular—is a surpassing of the status quo and a heralding of a pro quo which itself is the negation of the social-artistic value system embodied by the old status quo. The essence of the status quo, as Chekov saw it, consisted in the perpetuation of a value-system based on the illusion of 'good' and 'bad'. Therefore, his vision of a futuristic pro quo eliminated any superhuman dimension in the sense of excluding any element beyond people's own 'being-in-the-world' in his presentation of human relations. Therein lies his naturalism which could be termed as enlightened humanist naturalism. It is a naturalism that is historically circumscribed but which, at the same time, surpasses the determinism of the traditional naturalists by emphasizing (although with a great deal of bitter cynicism) the role of the individual and the masses in the process of civilizational change. And it is here that Chekov's enlightened humanism lies.

Within this enlightened humanist perspective all humans are equally embraced by the author. However, having eliminated the dimension of the 'beyond' from his world-view (in the metaphysical as well as in the material sense), cynicism which sometimes verges on black pessimism, permeates Chekov's dramatic world. Leo

Wiener, one of Chekov's translators, writes about this pessimism :

> A pessimistic vein runs through all his productions, and all his characters seem to fit subjects for the psychiatrist; this is especially the case in two of his drama, **The Mew** and **The Three Sisters**, in which there is not one redeeming person, and where the very language of the dramatis personae is nothing but a series of semi-articulated hysterical ejaculations. He is a great favourite with the Russian reading public, but the foreigner will lay aside his books with great admiration for his talent and with a shudder at the hopeless condition of Russian society.(17)

This is due to Chekov's consciousness of the outdatedness of pure enlightenment, that is commitment to pure reason as a civilisational value in itself and for itself. Within the Russian society of his time, which was undergoing a revolutionary transition, Enlightenment in the French style as borrowed by the Russian aristocracy,(18) as repsented by Ranevsky and Gayev and parodied in their servants Yasha and Doonysha, was a mere luxury, just as the intellectual, non-committed enlightenment of the Russian intelligentsia, represented by Trofimov, was

a deadening weapon for it alienated itself from the masses. Commitment of reason to social change was the pro quo that Chekov was looking foward to and at the same time found absolutely lacking in the world of the status quo. Hence, his apparent pessimism.

The question now is :

How does Chekov convey his futuristic vision of a pro quo through his non-tragic, naturalistic method ?

In other words, how does Chekov formulate and tackle the dialectical relation between subject/object, self/society, as a by-product of the civilizational transition which both his society and the theatre of his time were undergoing ?

The answer to these questions is two-dimensional : first, it involves the problem of the individual in Chekov's plays in relation to the problematic of being and consciousness; second, it deals with the nature of Chekov's non-tragic vision which he expressed in the incongruity between comedy (i.e. the comic), and tragedy (i.e. the pathetic). The latter dimension which reveals Chekov's vision and the method by which he conveys that vision, raises the question of form as ideology. Chekov's ideo-

logy which can be detected from his ambivalent attitude towards the question fo social change, as reflected in his comic-tragic vision, can be considered as a by-product of the first issue, namely, the problem of being and consciousness as the pivotal issue of the individual.

In dealing with the first issue, we refer to Marx's definition of being and consciousness. According to Marx : "It is not consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness... (for) it is not consciouness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness. For the first manner of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; for the second manner of approach, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness."(19)

The question is :

How does this definition apply to Chekov's own understanding and representation of his individual characters in **The Cherry Orchard ?**

The answer to that question will clarify the misinterpretation of **The Cherry Orchard** by going back to the roots of dramatic representation and then relating

it to Marx's account of being and consciousness. If, in dramatic terms, consciousness is located in the inner world of the individual character, i.e. the psyche, and is artistically conveyed through a mood of tragic pathos, that is, by promoting the pathetic over the comic, consciousness remains isolated from the immediate surrounding of the individual and is treated on a purely ontological level. For Chekov, however, the ontology of the individual is deeply rooted in his social environment, that is, consciousness for Chekov is consciousness of being, and being is strictly social-cultural. Hence, the pathetic, which concentrates on the individual's subjective, inner sufferings and joys, is dialectically interwoven with the comic which represents the objective, outer environment out of which consciousness emerged. Hence, if the individual's being is separated from his consciousness of his social being, he ceases to be, for no individual can fully exist on the level of pure consciousness. Hence, the characters of **The Cherry Orchard**, despite the diversity of their social origins suffer a total separation from their being. They confront a new level of being with an old consciousness which is the by-product of a former being, socially and culturally. The concrete embodiment of that gap is symbolically represented by the cherry orchard to which all characters relate and with which they identify their being. For Chekov the existence of those characters is

tantamount to non-being. Being out of time, together these characters constitute a mosaic of beautiful phantoms emerging out of an old painting. Thus, Ranevsky and Gayev together with Feers who inhabit a world that no longer exists due to the separation of their consciousness from their being, are unable to relate to a new being and all they can do is retreat into their own consciousness, which is no consciousness at all since it is out of touch with reality.

Hence, the symbol of the orchard which fills the gap resulting from the separation between consciousness and being, and which is chopped off at the end of the play, is Chekov's historic statement on his age. The civilizational rupture, which is symbollically rendered by the choping off of the orchard at the end of the play and by the snapping of the string and the dying away of the far-away sound that seems to come out of the sky in Act II, indicates that the world of human phantoms is being superseded and taken over by a reality that is as hard as the axe that is heard off-stage chopping off the orchard which represents the last vestiges of a dying culture based on pure illusionism. Trofimov's and Anya's rhetorically rendered idealistic visions of a new Russia that would be the extention of the orchard should not be excluded from this dying wold. The only active force

which possesses the power of interacting with reality by controlling and changing it, however, is Lopakhin.

The issue of consciousness is tightly related with another important problem, namely, time as being a decisive factor that determines one of the essential dimensions of history as well as the individual's consciousness. The following dialogue in Act I provides a good example:

> GAYEV : I go in, off. Once upon a time, sister, we used to sleep in this very room ; and now I am fifty-one. Odd, isn't it ?
> LOPAKHIN : Yes, time is passing.
> GAYEV : Eh ?
> LOPAKHIN : Time, I say, is passing.
> GAYEV : There's a smell of cheap scent.

Gayev's use of the word 'time' to refer to the past as a stagnant moment in "Once upon a time," is ironically contrasted to Gayev's use of the same word to indicate the passage of time and hence his consciousness of change. Gayev's response, or rather lack of response, by making a totally irrelevant remark indicates his absolute separation from reality by being out of touch with time as the most vital dimension of that changing reality. However, despite the pathetic nature of Gayev's situation the effect it leaves on the spectator is comic.

Time plays a major role in **The Cherry Orchard** both on the level of the play's structure and characterisation. In terms of structure, the play begins with the arrival, or rather the belated arrival of the Gayev family and ends with their departure never to return again. The late arrival and departure which envelop the play indicate the circularity of the path which the process of transformation takes and which involves the passing away of the orchard and with it the aristocratic culture of Ranevsky and Gayev. This circularity in turn points to Chekov's vision of a "no-beyond" being that which the orchard embodies, along with the characters who identify with it, after it has been demolished. In other words, the saving of the orchard can only be realised by destroying it and which at the same time means the annulling of the aristocracy and the liberal, humanitarian culture which has accompanied it. For it is Lopakhin, the practical-minded bourgeois businessman the representative of the new forces of the pro quo, who reminds everybody of the passing of time and of the need to take action. Time is on his side and, therefore, he can confront it and control it. While for the others time is an enemy and a constant reminder of their eventual death and, therefore, they try to evade it. However, they are forced ultimately to confront it and are transported away in due course, having outlived their time,

Hence, to represent the characters in a pathetic way, as Stanislavsky did, is a total misunderstanding of the intentions of the author. For Chekov's purpose has never been to make the audience identify with any of the characters, nor does he intend to create any kind of empathy with any of them. On the contrary, the dialogue on many occasions, as well as other dramatic devices (e.g. Lopakin's narrative account of his childhood and Gayev's famous speech infront of the bookcase in Act one; Trofimov's rhetorical speeches, the guitar music, the snapping of the string, Charlotta's tricks and her dance in Act Three), indicate that a distance between audience and characters should be maintained through the art of presentation in acting and stage directions. It necessitates a method which is based on a social-critical attitude by actors, director, and audience. A method that alienates the audience from all characters alike in order to allow the audience the freedom of criticism. This method of alienation, which was later identified with Brecht's theatre, has its origins in Russian formalism as advocated by Victor Shlovsky in his article "Art as Method" or Priem Ostrannenija meaning the "device of making strange."(20) Shlovsky, in his famous article, applied this method to Tolstoy's **War and Peace** with the purpose of showing the function of the method which is to "lay bare the artifice and to destroy the illusion of reality by means of parody and stylization."(21) The device of

parody is used by Chekov in **The Cherry Orchard** through the characters of the servants who parody their masters, and by reproducing the degenerate style of life and culture of their masters, the servants give up their potential as a social force capable of change. Paradoy, as a dramatic device, is intended to create an ironic-comic effect, just as stylization is another device leading to the same goal. Stylization of character is a basic feature in **The Cherry Orchard** which reduces the characters, sometimes to certain mannerisms to bring out their potential comic features in order to distance them from the audience (e.g. Gayev's imaginary billiards game and his devouring of sweets all the time ; the compulsive crying of Varya, the cry-baby as Chekov called her ; the irrational sentimentalism of Ranevsky; and the frentic idealism of Trofimov).

The overall purpose of this method of distanciation, or what came to be known as 'militant anti-psychologism', was to oppose the officially approved Stanislavsky method, and which Chekov rejected in the production of **The Cherry Orchard.** In this sense, Chekov could be regarded as a forerunner of the school of Russian Formalists, a "school of Soviet literary criticism headed by Victor Shlovsky and flourished during the 1920s and was bitterly attacked for its exaggeratedly non-political views."(22)

The question now is :

To what extent did Chekov share the non-political ideology of the Formalists ?

In a letter to the poet Pleshcheyev that comes nearest to being his confession of faith as a writer, Chekov wrote :

> The people I fear are those who seek to read tendencies into what one writes, and who want to see me as straightforwardly liberal or conservative. I am not a liberal—not a conservative—not a gradualist—not a monk—not an indifferentist. I should like to be a free artist, and nothing else, and I regret that God has not given me the power to be one. I hate lies and violence in all their forms, stupidity, and arbitrariness reign not only in jails and merchants' houses; I see them in science, in literature, and among young people... That's why I nourish no particular predilection for security policemen or butchers or scholars or writers or young people. Signs and labels I account mere prejudices. My holy of holies is the human body, health, intelligence, talent, inspiration, love, and the most absolute freedom from force and lies, in whatever form those last two might be expressed. That is the programme to which I should adhere were I a mapor artist. (23)

Chekov's insistence on not committing himself to a particular ideology, whether political or otherwise, due to his absolute faith in the human being and his welfare, points to his commitment to humanism in a liberal, non-dogmatic manner. Chekov's humanism, therefore, surpasses his naturalism. For, on one hand, it goes beyond the mere natural appearance of things by penetrating through man's essential good nature. On the other hand, Chekov's humanist-naturalism embraces the whole of humanity in its entirety departing from the human being as the measure of all things. However, such view is critical of man's condition which is historically perceived, and brings out the inherent and the visible contradictions manifested in inner and outer behaviour. Chekov's awareness of these contradictions, and his refusal to take a biased and partial attitude to surpass the contradictions, bring him closer to Samuel Beckett rather than to 19th century naturalists. In this sense Chekov's misinterpreted 'pessimism' can be explained in the light of Beckett's own misunderstood black pessimism. Chekov's "post-naturalism" can be interpreted as a prelude to Beckett's so-called existentialist or absurd theatre. Beckett had described what critics called his pessimism, as the "mess" as an expression of his own consciousness of the state of being, in the following words : "What is more true than anything else ? To swim is true. and to

sink is true. One is not true than the other. One cannot speak anymore of being, one must speak only of the mess. When Heidegger and Sartre speak of a contrast between being and existence, they may be right, I don't know, but their language is too philosophical for me. I am not a philosopher, One can only speak of what is in front of him, and that now is simply the mess."(24) Beckett further clarifies his understanding of the contradiction between life and death which underlies the human situation by saying :

> If life and death did not both present themselves to us, there would be no inscrutability. If there were only darkness, all would be clear. It is because there is not only darkness but also light that our situation becomes inexplicable. Take Augustine's doctrine of grace given and grace withheld : have you pondered the dramatic qualities in this theology ? Two thieves are crucified with Christ, one saved and the other damned. How can we make sense of this division ? In classical drama, such problems do not arise. The destiny of Racine's Phedre is sealed from the beginning : she will proceed into the dark. As she goes, she herself will be illuminated. At the beginning of the play she has partial illumination and at the end she has complete illu-

...u, but there has been no question but that she moves toward the dark. That is the play. Within this notion clarity is possible, but for us who are neither Greek nor Jansenist there is not such clarity. The question would also be removed if we believed in the contrary—total salvation. But where we have both dark and light we have also the inexplicable. The key word in my plays is "perhaps."(25)

With this word "perhaps" Beckett acknowledges the dialectics of the human condition without surpassing the contradictions of the dialectical relation between life and death for instance, by a future perspective of a pro quo. However, he allows room for the possibility of a way out, but the road to this way-out should start from a concrete awareness of the present mess. Chekov's situation was similar to Beckett's to a great extent. Seeing in reality a source for dramatic situations, dramatic tension and conflict, he derived pleasure in portraying the different poles of the dialectical process without wanting to side with either side of the dialectic. Yet, due to Chekov's strong social conscience, he was painfully aware of his own inability to surpass his outdated non-committed humanism in an age of sharp social transitions that demanded clear ideological and partisan com-

mitment. The reason for this inability, paradoxically enough, lies in Chekov's view of the "no-beyond", or the limitations of the here and now, both metaphysically theologically, and above all, socially despite his acceptance of the evolution of civilisation. And here lies another similarity between Chekov and Beckett, that is, the belief in the "non-beyond" as an essential dimension of being and consciousness. But, whereas Beckett's more crystallised view of the no-beyond, after having survived two world wars, was translated into a totally new and unprecedented form in the theatre, Chekov still conveyed his vision in the traditional naturalistic form with some innovations by concentrating on the psychological mood of characters.

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THE CHERRY ORCHARD

A Comedy in Four Acts

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

RANYEVSKAIA, Liubov Andryeevna (Liuba), a landowner
ANIA (Anichka), her daughter, aged 17
VARIA (Varvara Mihailovna), her adopted daughter, aged 24
GAYEV, Leonid Andryeevich (Lionia), brother of Mme Ranyevskaia
LOPAKHIN, Yermolai Aleksyeevich, a business-man
TROFIMOV, Piotr Serghyeevich (Pyetia), a student
SIMEONOV-PISHCHIK, Boris Borisovich, a landowner
CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA, a German governess
YEPIHODOV, Semion Pantelyeevich, a clerk on Ranyevskaia's estate
DOONIASHA (Avdotyia Fiodorovna), a parlourmaid
FEERS (Feers Nikolayevich), a man-servant, aged 87
YASHA, a young man-servant
A TRAMP
STATION-MASTER
POST-OFFICE CLERK
GUESTS, SERVANTS

The action takes place on the estate of Mme Ranyevskaia

ACT ONE

[A room which used to be the children's bedroom and is still referred to as the 'nursery'. There are several doors: one of them leads into ANIA'S *room. It is early morning: the sun is just coming up. The windows of the room are shut, but through them the cherry trees can be seen in blossom. It is May, but in the orchard there is morning frost.*

Enter DOONIASHA, *carrying a candle, and* LOPAKHIN *with a book in his hand.]*

LOPAKHIN. The train's arrived, thank God. What time is it?

DOONIASHA. It's nearly two. [*Blows out the candle.*] It's light already.

LOPAKHIN. How late was the train then? Two hours at least. [*Yawns and stretches.*] How stupid I am! What a fool I've made of myself! Came here on purpose to go to the station and meet them – and then overslept! ... Dropped off to sleep in the chair. Annoying ... I wish you'd woken me up.

DOONIASHA. I thought you'd gone. [*Listens.*] Sounds as if they're coming.

LOPAKHIN [*also listens*]. No. ... They'll have to get their luggage out, and all that. ... [*Pause.*] Liubov Andryeevna has been abroad for five years, I don't know what she's like now.... She used to be a good soul. An easy-going, simple kind of person. I remember when I was a boy of about fifteen, my father – he had a small shop in the village then – hit me in the face and made my nose bleed. ... We had come to the manor for something or other, and he'd been drinking, I remember it as if it happened yesterday: Liubov Andryeevna – she was still young and slender then – brought me in and took me to the washstand in this very room, the nursery it was then. 'Don't cry, little peasant,'

she said, 'it'll be better before you're old enough to get married'. ... [*Pause.*] 'Little peasant'. ... She was right enough, my father was a peasant. Yet here I am – all dressed up in a white waistcoat and brown shoes.... But you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. I am rich, I've got a lot of money, but anyone can see I'm just a peasant, anyone who takes the trouble to think about me and look under my skin. [*Turning over pages in the book.*] I've been reading this book, and I haven't understood a word of it. I fell asleep reading it. [*Pause.*]

DOONIASHA. The dogs didn't sleep all night: they know their masters are coming.

LOPAKHIN. What's the matter, Dooniasha?

DOONIASHA. My hands are trembling. I feel as if I'm going to faint.

LOPAKHIN. You're too refined and sensitive, Dooniasha. You dress yourself up like a lady, and you do your hair like one, too. That won't do, you know. You must remember your place.

[*Enter* YEPIHODOV *with a bunch of flowers; he wears a jacket and brightly polished high boots which squeak loudly; as he comes in, he drops the flowers.*]

YEPIHODOV [*picks up the flowers*]. The gardener sent these. He says they're to go in the dining-room. [*Hands the flowers to* DOONIASHA.]

LOPAKHIN. And bring me some kvass.

DOONIASHA. Very well.

YEPIHODOV. There's a frost outside, three degrees of it, and the cherry trees are covered with bloom. I can't approve of this climate of ours, you know. [*Sighs.*] No, I can't. It doesn't contribute to – to things, I mean. And do you know, Yermolai Aleksyeevich, I bought myself a pair of boots the day before yesterday, and they squeak so terribly ... well, I mean to say, it's utterly impossible, you know.... What can I put on them?

LOPAKHIN. Oh, leave me alone. You make me tired.

YEPIHODOV. Every day something or other unpleasant happens to me. But I don't complain; I'm accustomed to it, I even laugh at it.

[*Enter* DOONIASHA; *she serves* LOPAKHIN *with kvass.*]

I'll leave you now. [*Bumps into a chair which falls over.*] You see! [*Triumphantly.*] You can see for yourself what it is, I mean to say ... so to speak. ... It's simply extraordinary! [*Goes out.*]

DOONIASHA. I want to tell you a secret, Yermolai Alekseyevich. Yepihodov proposed to me.

LOPAKHIN. Ah!

DOONIASHA. I don't know what to do.... He's a quiet man, but sometimes he gets talking, and then you can't understand anything he says. It sounds nice, it sounds very moving, but you just can't understand it. I think I like him a little, and he's madly in love with me. He's an unlucky sort of person, something unpleasant seems to happen to him every day. That's why they tease him and call him 'two-and-twenty misfortunes'.

LOPAKHIN [*listens*]. I think I can hear them coming. ...

DOONIASHA. Coming! ... Oh, dear! I don't know what's the matter with me. ... I feel cold all over.

LOPAKHIN. Yes, they really are coming! Let's go and meet them at the door. I wonder if she'll recognize me? We haven't met for five years.

DOONIASHA [*agitated*]. I'm going to faint. ... Oh, I'm fainting! ...

[*The sound of two coaches driving up to the house is heard.* LOPAKHIN *and* DOONIASHA *go out quickly. The stage is empty. Then there are sounds of people arriving in the adjoining room.* FEERS, *leaning on a stick, crosses the stage hurriedly: he has been to the station to meet Liubov Andryeevna. He is dressed in an old-fashioned livery coat and a top hat and is muttering to himself, though it is impossible to make out what he is saying.*

The noises off stage become louder. A voice says: 'Let's go through here'. Enter LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA, ANIA *and* CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA, *leading a small dog, all in travelling clothes,* VARIA, *wearing an overcoat and a kerchief over her head,* GAYEV, SIMEONOV-PISHCHIK, LOPAKHIN, DOONIASHA, *carrying a bundle and an umbrella, and other servants with luggage.*]

ANIA. Let's go through here. You remember what room this is, Mamma?

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*joyfully, through her tears*]. The nursery!

VARIA. How cold it is! My hands are quite numb. [*To* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA.] Your rooms are just as you left them, Mamma dear, the white one, and the mauve one.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. The nursery, my dear, my beautiful room! ... I used to sleep here when I was little. ... [*Cries.*] And now I feel as if I were little again. ... [*She kisses her brother, then* VARIA, *then her brother again.*] And Varia is just the same as ever, looking like a nun. I recognized Dooniasha, too. [*Kisses* DOONIASHA.]

GAYEV. The train was two hours late. Just think of it! What efficiency!

CHARLOTTA [*to* PISHCHIK]. My dog actually eats nuts.

PISHCHIK [*astonished*]. Fancy that!

[*They all go out except* ANIA *and* DOONIASHA.]

DOONIASHA. We've waited and waited for you. ... [*Helps* ANIA *to take off her hat and coat.*]

ANIA. I haven't slept for four nights. ... I'm frozen.

DOONIASHA. You went away during Lent and it was snowing and freezing then, but now it's spring-time. Darling! [*She laughs and kisses her.*] I could hardly bear waiting for you, my pet, my precious. ... But I must tell you at once, I can't wait a minute longer. ...

ANIA [*without enthusiasm*]. What is it this time? ...

DOONIASHA. Yepihodov, the clerk, proposed to me just after Easter.

ANIA. You never talk about anything else. ... [*Tidies her hair.*] I've lost all my hairpins. ... [*She is very tired and can hardly keep on her feet.*]

DOONIASHA. I really don't know what to think. He loves me ... he does love me so!

ANIA [*looking through the door into her room, tenderly*]. My own room, my own windows, just as if I had never been away! I'm home again! Tomorrow I'm going to get up and run straight into the garden! Oh, if only I could go to bed and sleep now! I couldn't sleep all the way back, I was so worried.

DOONIASHA. Piotr Serghyeevich arrived the day before yesterday.

ANIA [*joyfully*]. Pyetia!

DOONIASHA. He's sleeping in the bath-house, and living there, too. 'I wouldn't like to inconvenience them,' he said. [*Looks at her watch.*] I ought to wake him up, but Varvara Mihailovna told me not to. 'Don't you wake him,' she said.

[*Enter* VARIA *with a bunch of keys at her waist.*]

VARIA. Dooniasha, make some coffee, quick! Mamma is asking for coffee.

DOONIASHA. It'll be ready in a moment. [*Goes out.*]

VARIA. Thank God, you've arrived. You're home again. [*Embracing her.*] My darling's come back! My precious!

ANIA. If you only knew the things I had to put up with!

VARIA. I can just imagine it.

ANIA. I left just before Easter: it was cold then. Charlotta never stopped talking, never left off doing her silly conjuring tricks all the way. Why did you make me take Charlotta?

VARIA. But how could you go alone, darling? At seventeen!

ANIA. When we arrived in Paris it was cold and snowing.

My French was awful. Mamma was living on the fifth floor, and when I got there she had visitors. There were some French ladies there and an old priest with a little book, and the room was full of cigarette smoke, so untidy and uncomfortable. Suddenly I felt so sorry for Mamma, so sorry, that I took her head between my hands, and just couldn't let it go. ... Afterwards Mamma cried and was very sweet to me.

VARIA [*tearfully*]. I can hardly bear listening to you. ...

ANIA. She had already sold her villa near Mentone, and she had nothing left, positively nothing. And I hadn't any money left either, not a penny: I had hardly enough to get to Paris. And Mamma couldn't grasp that! In station restaurants she would order the most expensive dishes and tip the waiters a rouble each. Charlotta was just the same. And Yasha expected a full-course dinner for himself: it was simply dreadful. You know, Yasha is Mamma's valet, we brought him with us.

VARIA. Yes, I've seen the wretch.

ANIA. Well, how are things going? Have we paid the interest?

VARIA. Far from it.

ANIA. Oh dear! Oh dear!

VARIA. The estate will be up for sale in August.

ANIA. Oh dear!

LOPAKHIN [*puts his head through the door and bleats*]. Me-e-e. ... [*Disappears.*]

VARIA [*tearfully*]. I'd like to give him this. ... [*Clenches her fist.*]

ANIA [*her arms round* VARIA, *dropping her voice*]. Varia, has he proposed to you?

[VARIA *shakes her head.*]

But he loves you. ... Why don't you talk it over with him, what are you waiting for?

VARIA. I don't believe anything will come of it. He's too

busy, he's no time to think of me. . . . He takes no notice of me at all. I'd rather he didn't come, it makes me miserable to see him. Everyone's talking of our wedding, everyone's congratulating me, but in fact there's nothing in it, it's all a kind of dream. [*In a changed tone of voice.*] You've got a new brooch, a bee, isn't it?

ANIA [*sadly*]. Mamma bought it for me. [*She goes into her room and now speaks gaily, like a child.*] You know, I went up in a balloon in Paris!

VARIA. My darling's home again! My precious girl!

[DOONIASHA *returns with a coffee-pot and prepares coffee.*]

VARIA [*standing by* ANIA'S *door*]. You know, dearest, as I go about the house doing my odd jobs, I'm always dreaming and dreaming. If only we could marry you to some rich man, I feel my mind would be at ease. I'd go away then, first to a hermitage, then on to Kiev, to Moscow . . . walking from one holy place to another. I'd go on and on. Oh, what a beautiful life!

ANIA. The birds are singing in the garden. What time is it?

VARIA. It must be gone two. Time you went to bed, darling. [*Goes into* ANIA'S *room.*] A beautiful life!

[*Enter* YASHA, *carrying a travelling rug and a small bag.*]

YASHA [*crossing the stage, in an affectedly genteel voice*]. May I go through here?

DOONIASHA. I can hardly recognize you, Yasha. You've changed so abroad.

YASHA. Hm! And who are you?

DOONIASHA. When you left here, I was no bigger than this. . . . [*Shows her height from the floor with her hand.*] I'm Dooniasha, Fiodor Kosoyedov's daughter. You can't remember!

YASHA. Hm! Quite a little peach! [*Looks round, puts his arms round her; she cries out and drops a saucer.* YASHA *goes out quickly.*]

VARIA [*in the doorway, crossly*]. What's going on here?

DOONIASHA [*tearfully*]. I've broken a saucer.

VARIA. That's a good omen.

ANIA [*coming out of her room*]. We ought to warn Mamma that Pyetia is here.

VARIA. I gave orders not to wake him.

ANIA [*pensively*]. It was six years ago that father died, and then, only a month after that, little brother Grisha was drowned in the river. He was only seven, such a pretty little boy! Mamma couldn't bear it and went away... she never looked back. [*Shivers.*] How well I understand her! If she only knew how I understand her! [*Pause.*] And, of course, Pyetia Trofimov was Grisha's tutor, he might remind her....

[*Enter* FEERS, *wearing a jacket and a white waistcoat.*]

FEERS [*goes to the coffee-pot, preoccupied*]. Madam will have her coffee here. [*Puts on white gloves.*] Is the coffee ready?

[*To* DOONIASHA, *severely.*] What about the cream?

DOONIASHA. Oh, my goodness! [*Goes out quickly.*]

FEERS [*fussing around the coffee-pot*]. The girl's daft. ... [*Mutters.*] From Paris. ... The master used to go to Paris years ago.... Used to go by coach. ... [*Laughs.*]

VARIA. Feers, what are you laughing at?

FEERS. What can I get you, Madam? [*Happily.*] The mistress is home again! Home at last! I don't mind if I die now.... [*Weeps with joy.*]

[*Enter* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA, LOPAKHIN, GAYEV *and* SIMEONOV-PISHCHIK, *the last wearing a long peasant coat of finely-woven cloth and wide trousers tucked inside high boots.* GAYEV, *as he comes in, moves his arms and body as if he were playing billards.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. How does it go now? Let me think. ... I pot the red. ... I go in off into the middle pocket!

GAYEV. I pot into the corner pocket! ... Years ago you and

I slept in this room, little brother and sister together; and now I'm fifty-one, strange as it may seem.

LOPAKHIN. Yes, time flies.

GAYEV. What?

LOPAKHIN. Time flies, I say.

GAYEV. This place smells of patchouli. . . .

ANIA. I think I'll go to bed. Good-night, Mamma. [*Kisses her.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. My precious child! [*Kisses her hands.*] You're glad to be home, aren't you? I still feel dazed.

ANIA. Good-night, Uncle.

GAYEV [*kisses her face and hands*]. God bless you. How like your mother you are! [*To his sister.*] You looked exactly like her at her age, Liuba.

[ANIA *shakes hands with* LOPAKHIN *and* PISHCHIK, *goes out and shuts the door after her.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. She's very tired.

PISHCHIK. It's a long journey.

VARIA [*to* LOPAKHIN *and* PISHCHIK]. Well, gentlemen? It's past two, time to break up the party.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*laughs*]. You're just the same, Varia. [*Draws* VARIA *to her and kisses her.*] Let me have some coffee, then we'll all go. [FEERS *places a cushion under her feet.*] Thank you, my dear. I've got into the habit of drinking coffee. I drink it day and night. Thank you, my dear old friend. [*Kisses* FEERS.]

VARIA. I'd better see if all the luggage is there. [*Goes out.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Is it really me sitting here? [*Laughs.*] I feel like dancing and flinging my arms about. [*Hides her face in her hands.*] What if I'm just dreaming? God, how I love my own country! I love it so much, I could hardly see it from the train, I was crying all the time. [*Through tears.*] However, I must drink my coffee. Thank

you, Feers, thank you, my dear old friend. I am so glad I found you still alive.

FEERS. The day before yesterday.

GAYEV. He doesn't hear very well.

LOPAKHIN. I've got to leave for Kharkov soon after four. What a nuisance! I'd like to have a good look at you, to have a talk.... You look as lovely as ever.

PISHCHIK [*breathing heavily*]. She looks prettier. In her Parisian clothes ... enough to turn anybody's head!

LOPAKHIN. Your brother here – Leonid Andryeevich – says that I'm a country bumpkin, a tight-fisted peasant, but I don't take any notice of that. Let him say what he likes. The only thing I want is for you to have faith in me as you did before. Merciful God! My father was your father's serf, and your grandfather's, too, but you did so much for me in the past that I forget everything and love you as if you were my own sister ... more than my own sister.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. I just can't sit still, I simply can't! [*She jumps up and walks about the room in great agitation.*] This happiness is too much for me. You can laugh at me, I'm foolish.... My dear bookcase! [*Kisses bookcase.*] My own little table!

GAYEV. You know, old Nanny died while you were away.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*sits down and drinks coffee*]. Yes, I know. May the Kingdom of Heaven be hers. They wrote to tell me.

GAYEV. Anastasiy died, too. Petrooshka Kosoy has left me and is working for the police in town. [*Takes a box of boiled sweets from his pocket and puts one in his mouth.*]

PISHCHIK. My daughter, Dashenka, sends her greetings to you.

LOPAKHIN. I feel I'd like to tell you something nice, something jolly. [*Glances at his watch.*] I'll have to go in a moment, there's no time to talk. However, I could tell you in a few words. You know, of course, that your cherry

orchard is going to be sold to pay your debts. The auction is to take place on the twenty-second of August, but there's no need for you to worry. You can sleep in peace, my dear; there's a way out. This is my plan, please listen carefully. Your estate is only twenty miles from town, and the railway line is not far away. Now, if your cherry orchard and the land along the river are divided into plots and leased out for summer residences you'll have a yearly income of at least twenty-five thousand roubles.

GAYEV. But what nonsense!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. I don't quite understand you, Yermolai Alcksyeevich.

LOPAKHIN. You'll charge the tenants at least twenty-five roubles a year for a plot of one acre, and if you advertise now, I'm prepared to stake any amount you like that you won't have a spot of land unoccupied by the autumn: it will be snatched up. In fact, I really feel I must congratulate you, you're saved after all! It's a marvellous situation and the river's deep enough for bathing. But, of course, the place will have to be cleaned up, put in order. For instance, all the old outbuildings will have to be pulled down, as well as this house which is no good to anybody. The old cherry orchard should be cut down, too.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Cut down? My dear man, forgive me, you don't seem to understand. If there's one thing interesting, one thing really outstanding in the whole county, it's our cherry orchard.

LOPAKHIN. The only outstanding thing about this orchard is that it's very large. It only produces a crop every other year, and then there's nobody to buy it.

GAYEV. This orchard is actually mentioned in the Encyclopaedia.

LOPAKHIN [*glancing at his watch*]. If you can't think clearly about it, or come to a decision, the cherry orchard and the whole estate as well will be sold by auction. You must

decide! There's no other way out, I assure you. There's no other way.

FEERS. In the old days, forty or fifty years ago, the cherries were dried, preserved, marinaded, made into jam, and sometimes . . .

GAYEV. Be quiet, Feers.

FEERS. And sometimes, whole cartloads of dried cherries were sent to Moscow and Kharkov. The money they fetched! And the dried cherries in those days were soft, juicy, sweet, tasty. . . . They knew how to do it then . . . they had a recipe. . . .

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. And where is that recipe now?

FEERS. Forgotten. No one can remember it.

PISHCHIK [*to* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA]. What was it like in Paris? Did you eat frogs?

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. I ate crocodiles.

PISHCHIK. Fancy that!

LOPAKHIN. Up to just recently there were only gentry and peasants living in the country, but now there are all these summer residents. All the towns, even quite small ones, are surrounded with villas. And probably in the course of the next twenty years or so, these people will multiply tremendously. At present they merely drink tea on the verandah, but they might start cultivating their plots of land, and then your cherry orchard would be gay with life and wealth and luxury. . . .

GAYEV [*indignantly*]. What nonsense!

[*Enter* VARIA *and* YASHA.]

VARIA. Here are two telegrams for you, Mamma dear. [*Picks out a key and unlocks an old bookcase with a jingling noise.*] Here they are.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. They are from Paris. [*Tears them up without reading them.*] I've finished with Paris.

GAYEV. Do you know, Liuba, how old this bookcase is? A week ago I pulled out the bottom drawer, and I found

some figures burnt in the wood. It was made exactly a hundred years ago. What do you think of that, eh? We ought to celebrate its anniversary. An inanimate object, true, but still – a bookcase!

PISHCHIK [*astonished*]. A hundred years! Fancy that!

GAYEV. Yes. ... This is a valuable piece of furniture. [*Feeling round the bookcase with his hands.*] My dear, venerable bookcase! I salute you! For more than a hundred years you have devoted yourself to the highest ideals of goodness and justice. For a hundred years you have never failed to fill us with an urge to useful work; several generations of our family have had their courage sustained and their faith in a better future fortified by your silent call; you have fostered in us the ideal of public good and social consciousness.

[*Pause.*]

LOPAKHIN. Yes. ...

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. You're just the same, Lionia.

GAYEV [*slightly embarrassed*]. I pot into the corner pocket! I pot into the middle pocket! ...

LOPAKHIN [*glances at his watch*]. Well, it's time for me to be going.

YASHA [*brings medicine to* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA]. Would you care to take your pills now?

PISHCHIK. Don't take medicines, my dear ... they don't do you any good ... or harm either. Let me have them. [*Takes the box from her, pours the pills into the palm of his hand, blows on them, puts them all into his mouth and takes a drink of* kvass.] There!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*alarmed*]. But you're mad!

PISHCHIK. I've taken all the pills.

LOPAKHIN. What a digestion!

[*All laugh.*]

FEERS. His honour came to see us in Holy Week, and ate half-a-bucketful of salt cucumbers. [*Mutters.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. What is it he's saying?

VARIA. He's been muttering for the last three years. We're accustomed to it.

YASHA. It's his age....

[CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA, *very thin and tightly laced in a white dress, with a lorgnette at her waist, passes across the stage.*]

LOPAKHIN. Forgive me, Charlotta Ivanovna, I haven't yet had time to say how d'you do to you. [*Tries to kiss her hand*].

CHARLOTTA [*withdrawing her hand*]. If you were permitted to kiss a lady's hand, you'd want to kiss her elbow next, and then her shoulder.

LOPAKHIN. I'm unlucky today.

[*All laugh.*]

Charlotta Ivanovna, do a trick for us.

CHARLOTTA. There's no need to, now. I want to go to bed. [*Goes out.*]

LOPAKHIN. I'll see you in three weeks' time. [*Kisses* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA'S *hand.*] Meanwhile, good-bye. Time to go. [*To* GAYEV.] Au revoir. [*Embraces* PISHCHIK.] Au revoir. [*Shakes hands with* VARIA, *then with* FEERS *and* YASHA.] I don't want to go, really. [*To* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA.] If you think over this question of country villas and come to a decision, let me know, and I'll get you a loan of fifty thousand or more. Think it over seriously.

VARIA [*crossly*]. Will you ever go away?

LOPAKHIN. I'm going, I'm going. [*Goes out.*]

GAYEV. What a boor! I beg your pardon.... Varia's going to marry him, he's Varia's precious fiancé.

VARIA. Please don't say anything uncalled for, Uncle dear.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Well, Varia, I shall be very glad. He's a good man.

PISHCHIK. He's a man ... let's admit it ... a most admirable fellow.... My Dashenka says so, too ... she says all

sorts of things. . . . [*He drops asleep and snores, but wakes up again at once.*] Incidentally, my dear, will you lend me two hundred and forty roubles? I've got to pay the interest on the mortgage tomorrow. . . .

VARIA [*in alarm*]. We haven't got it, we really haven't!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. It's quite true, I have nothing.

PISHCHIK. It'll turn up. [*Laughs.*] I never lose hope. Sometimes I think everything's lost, I'm ruined, and then – lo and behold! – a railway line is built through my land, and they pay me for it! Something or other is sure to happen, tomorrow, if not today. Perhaps Dashenka will win two hundred thousand roubles. She's got a lottery ticket.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. I've finished my coffee; now I can go and rest.

FEERS [*brushing* GAYEV, *admonishing him*]. You've put on the wrong pair of trousers again! What am I to do with you?

VARIA [*in a low voice*]. Ania's asleep. [*Quietly opens a window.*] The sun has risen, it's warmer already. Look, Mamma dear, how wonderful the trees are! Heavens, what lovely air! The starlings are singing!

GAYEV [*opens another window*]. The orchard is all white. You haven't forgotten, Liuba? How straight this long avenue is – quite straight, just like a ribbon that's been stretched taut. It glitters on moonlit nights. Do you remember? You haven't forgotten?

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*looks through the window at the orchard*]. Oh, my childhood, my innocent childhood! I used to sleep in this nursery; I used to look on to the orchard from here, and I woke up happy every morning. In those days the orchard was just as it is now, nothing has changed. [*Laughs happily.*] All, all white! Oh, my orchard! After the dark, stormy autumn and the cold winter, you are young and joyous again; the angels have not forsaken

you! If only this burden could be taken from me, if only I could forget my past!

GAYEV. Yes, and now the orchard is going to be sold to pay our debts, strange as it seems. . . .

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Look, there's Mother walking through the orchard . . . in a white dress! [*Laughs happily.*] It is her!

GAYEV. Where?

VARIA. Bless you, Mamma dear!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. It's no one, I only imagined it. Over there, you see, on the right, by the turning to the summer house there's a small white tree and it's bending over . . . it looks like a woman.

[*Enter* TROFIMOV. *He is dressed in a shabby student's uniform, and wears glasses.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. What a wonderful orchard! Masses of white blossom, the blue sky. . . .

TROFIMOV. Liubov Andryeevna! [*She turns to him.*] I'll just make my bow and go at once. [*Kisses her hand warmly.*] I was told to wait until the morning, but it was too much for my patience.

[LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA *looks at him, puzzled.*]

VARIA [*through tears*]. This is Pyetia Trofimov.

TROFIMOV. Pyetia Trofimov, I used to be tutor to your Grisha. Have I really changed so much?

[LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA *puts her arms round him and weeps quietly.*]

GAYEV [*embarrassed*]. Now, now, Liuba. . . .

VARIA [*weeps*]. Didn't I tell you to wait until tomorrow, Pyetia?

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. My Grisha . . . my little boy . . . Grisha . . . my son . . .

VARIA. There's nothing for it, Mamma darling. It was God's will.

TROFIMOV [*gently, with emotion*]. Don't, don't . . .

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*quietly weeping*]. My little boy was lost ... drowned. ... What for? What for, my friend? [*More quietly.*] Ania's asleep there, and here I am, shouting and making a scene. Well, Pyetia? How is it you've lost your good looks? Why have you aged so?

TROFIMOV. A peasant woman in the train called me 'that moth-eaten gent'.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. In those days you were quite a boy, a nice young student, and now your hair is thin, you wear glasses. ... Are you still a student? [*Walks to the door.*]

TROFIMOV. I expect I shall be a student to the end of my days.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*kisses her brother, then* VARIA]. Well, go to bed now. You have aged, too, Leonid.

PISHCHIK [*following her*]. So you're going to bed now? Och, my gout! I'd better stay the night here. And tomorrow morning, Liubov Andryeevna, my dear, I'd like to borrow those two hundred and forty roubles.

GAYEV. How the fellow keeps at it!

PISHCHIK. Two hundred and forty roubles. ... You see, I've got to pay the interest on the mortgage.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. I have no money, my dear.

PISHCHIK. I'll pay you back, my dear lady. It's a trifling amount, after all.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Very well, then. Leonid will give you the money. You give him the money, Leonid.

GAYEV. I'll be delighted; anything he wants, of course!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. What else can we do? He needs it. He'll pay it back.

[LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA, TROFIMOV, PISHCHIK *and* FEERS *go out*, GAYEV, VARIA *and* YASHA *remain.*]

GAYEV. My sister hasn't lost her habit of throwing money away. [*To* YASHA.] Out of the way, my man, you smell of the kitchen.

YASHA [*with a sneer*]. I see you're just the same as you used to be, Leonid Andryeevich.

GAYEV. What's that? [*To* VARIA.] What did he say?

VARIA [*to* YASHA]. Your mother's come from the village, she's been sitting in the servants' hall since yesterday, wanting to see you.

YASHA. I wish she'd leave me alone!

VARIA. You ... aren't you ashamed of yourself?

YASHA. It's quite unnecessary. She could have come tomorrow. [YASHA *goes out*.]

VARIA. Dear Mamma is just the same as she used to be, she hasn't changed a bit. If she had her own way, she'd give away everything.

GAYEV. Yes. ... You know, if a lot of cures are suggested for a disease, it means that the disease is incurable. I've been thinking and puzzling my brains, and I've thought of plenty of ways out, plenty – which means there aren't any. It would be a good thing if somebody left us some money, or if we married off our Ania to some very rich man, or if one of us went to Yaroslavl and tried our luck with the old aunt, the Countess. You know she's very rich.

VARIA [*weeping*]. If only God would help us.

GAYEV. Do stop blubbering! The Countess is very rich, but she doesn't like us. ... First, because my sister married a solicitor, and not a nobleman. ...

[ANIA *appears in the doorway*.]

She married a man who wasn't of noble birth ... and then you can't say her behaviour's been exactly virtuous. She's a good, kind, lovable person, and I'm very fond of her, but whatever extenuating circumstances you may think of, you must admit that she's a bit easy-going morally. You can sense it in every movement. ...

VARIA [*in a whisper*]. Ania's standing in the doorway.

GAYEV. What? [*A pause*.] Funny thing, something's got into

my right eye. ... I can't see properly. And on Thursday, when I was at the District Court. ...

[ANIA *comes in.*]

VARIA. Well, why aren't you asleep, Ania?

ANIA. I can't get to sleep. I just can't.

GAYEV. My dear little girl! [*Kisses* ANIA's *face and hands.*] My dear child! [*Through tears.*] You're not just a niece to me, you're an angel, you're everything to me. Please believe me, believe ...

ANIA. I believe you, Uncle. Everyone loves you, respects you ... but, dear Uncle, you oughtn't to talk, you ought to try to keep quiet. What was that you were saying just now about my mother, about your own sister? Why were you saying it?

GAYEV. Yes, yes! [*He takes her hand and puts it over his face.*] You're quite right, it's dreadful! My God! My God! And the speech I made today in front of the bookcase ... so foolish! And it was only after I'd finished that I realized it was foolish.

VARIA. It's true, Uncle dear, you ought to try to keep quiet. Just keep quiet, that's all.

ANIA. If you keep quiet, you'll be happier in yourself.

GAYEV. I'll be quiet. [*Kisses* ANIA's *and* VARIA's *hands.*] I'll be quiet. But I must tell you something important. Last Thursday I went to the District Court, and I got talking with some friends, and from what they said it looks as if it might be possible to get a loan on promissory notes, in order to pay the interest to the bank.

VARIA. If only God would help us!

GAYEV. I'll go there again on Tuesday and have another talk. [*To* VARIA.] Don't keep crying. [*To* ANIA.] Your mother's going to have a talk with Lopakhin: he won't refuse her, of course. And after you've had a rest, you will go to Yaroslavl, to see the Countess, your grandmother. And so we'll approach the matter from three angles, and –

the thing's done! We shall pay the interest, I'm sure of it. [*He puts a sweet into his mouth.*] I swear on my honour, on anything you like, that the estate will not be sold! [*Excited.*] I'll stake my happiness! Here's my hand, you can call me a good-for-nothing liar if I allow the auction to take place. I swear on my soul!

ANIA [*calmer, with an air of happiness*]. How good you are, Uncle, and how sensible! [*Puts her arms round him.*] I feel calmer now. I feel so calm and happy.

[*Enter* FEERS.]

FEERS [*reproachfully*]. Leonid Andryeevich, aren't you ashamed of yourself? When are you going to bed?

GAYEV. Presently, presently. You go away, Feers. I don't need your help. Well, children dear, bye-bye now.... All the news tomorrow, you must go to bed now. [*Kisses* ANIA *and* VARIA.] You know, I'm a man of the 'eighties. People don't think much of that period, but all the same, I can say that I've suffered quite a lot in the course of my life for my convictions. It's not for nothing that the peasants love me. You have to know the peasants! You have to know from which side...

ANIA. You're starting it again, Uncle!

VARIA. You'd better keep quiet, Uncle dear.

FEERS [*sternly*]. Leonid Andryeevich!

GAYEV. Coming, coming! Go to bed! In off the cushion! I pot the white!... [*Goes out;* FEERS *hobbles after him.*]

ANIA. My mind is at rest now. I don't really feel like going to Yaroslavl, I don't like Grandmamma; but still, I'm not worrying. I'm grateful to Uncle. [*She sits down.*]

VARIA. I must get some sleep. I'm going. Oh, by the way, while you were away something unpleasant happened here. You know, there are only a few old servants living in the servants' quarters: just Yefemooshka, Polia, Yevstignei and Karp. Well, they let some tramps sleep there, and I didn't say anything about it. But some time afterwards I

heard some gossip; people said I had ordered them to be fed on nothing but dried peas. Because I was mean, you see. ... Yevstignei was at the bottom of it all. 'Well,' I said to myself, 'if that's how the matter stands, just you wait!' So I sent for Yevstignei. [*Yawns.*] In he comes. 'What's all this, Yevstignei,' I said to him, 'idiot that you are.' ... [*She walks up to* ANIA.] Anichka! [*A pause.*] She's asleep! ... [*Takes her arm.*] Come to bed! Come! [*Leads her away.*] My darling's fallen asleep! Come. ...

[*They go towards the door. The sound of a shepherd's pipe is heard from far away, beyond the orchard.* TROFIMOV *crosses the stage, but, seeing* VARIA *and* ANIA, *stops.*]

VARIA. Sh-sh! She's asleep ... asleep ... Come, my dear.

ANIA [*softly, half-asleep*]. I'm so tired. ... I can hear bells tinkling all the time. ... Uncle ... dear ... Mamma and Uncle. ...

VARIA. Come, darling, come. ... [*They go into* ANIA'S *room.*]

TROFIMOV [*deeply moved*]. Ania ... my one bright star! My spring flower!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

[An old wayside shrine in the open country; it leans slightly to one side and has evidently been long abandoned. Beside it there are a well, an old seat and a number of large stones which apparently served as gravestones in the past. A road leads to GAYEV'S *estate. On one side and some distance away is a row of dark poplars, and it is there that the cherry orchard begins. Further away is seen a line of telegraph poles, and beyond them, on the horizon, the vague outlines of a large town, visible only in very good, clear weather.*

The sun is about to set. CHARLOTTA, YASHA *and* DOONIASHA *are sitting on the seat;* YEPIHODOV *is standing near by, playing a guitar; all look pensive.* CHARLOTTA *is wearing a man's old peaked cap; she has taken a shot-gun off her shoulder and is adjusting a buckle on the strap.]*

CHARLOTTA [*thoughtfully*]. I don't know how old I am. I haven't got a proper identity card, you see ... and I keep on imagining I'm still quite young. When I was little, father and mother used to tour the fairs and give performances – very good ones they were, too. And I used to jump the *salto-mortale* and do all sorts of other tricks. When Papa and Mamma died, a German lady took me into her house and began to give me lessons. So then I grew up and became a governess. But where I come from and who I am, I don't know. Who my parents were – perhaps they weren't properly married – I don't know. [*She takes a cucumber from her pocket and begins to eat it.*] I don't know anything. [*Pause.*] I'm longing to talk to someone, but there isn't anyone. I haven't anyone. ...

YEPIHODOV [*plays the guitar and sings*]. 'What care I for the noisy world? ... What are friends and foes to me?' How pleasant it is to play the mandoline!

DOONIASHA. That's a guitar, not a mandoline. [*She looks at herself in a hand mirror and powders her face.*]

YEPIHODOV. To a man that's crazy with love this is a mandoline. [*Sings quietly.*] 'If only my heart might be warmed by the ardour of love requited.' ...

[YASHA *joins in.*]

CHARLOTTA. How dreadful their singing is! ... Ach! It is like the jackals.

DOONIASHA [*to* YASHA]. You are lucky to have been abroad!

YASHA. Of course I am. I'm bound to agree with you there. [*Yawns, then lights a cigar.*]

YEPIHODOV. Stands to reason. Abroad everything's been in full swing. ... I mean to say, everything's been going on for ever so long.

YASHA. Obviously.

YEPIHODOV. Personally, I'm a cultured sort of fellow, I read all sorts of extraordinary books, you know, but somehow I can't seem to make out where I'm going, what it is I really want, I mean to say – to live or to shoot myself, so to speak. All the same, I always carry a revolver on me. Here it is. [*Shows the revolver.*]

CHARLOTTA. I have finished. Now I'm going. [*Slips the strap of the gun over her shoulder.*] Yes, you are a very clever man, Yepihodov, and rather frightening, too; the women must fall madly in love with you! Brrr! [*Walks off.*] All these clever people are so stupid, I have no one to talk to. I am so lonely, always so lonely, no one belongs to me, and ... and who I am, what I exist for, nobody knows. ... [*Goes out leisurely.*]

YEPIHODOV. Candidly speaking, and I do want to keep strictly to the point, by the way, but I feel I simply must explain that Fate, so to speak, treats me absolutely without mercy, just like a storm treats a small ship, as it were. I mean to say, supposing I'm wrong, for instance, then why

should I wake up this morning and suddenly see a simply colossal spider sitting on my chest? like this. ... [*Makes a gesture with both hands.*] Or supposing I pick up a jug to have a drink of kvass, there's sure to be something frightful inside it, such as a cockroach. [*Pause.*] Have you read Buckle? [*Pause.*] May I trouble you for a word, Avdotya Fiodorovna?

DOONIASHA. All right, carry on.

YEPIHODOV. I'd very much like to speak to you alone. [*Sighs.*]

DOONIASHA [*embarrassed*]. Very well then ... only will you bring me my little cape first. ... It's hanging beside the wardrobe. It's rather chilly here. ...

YEPIHODOV. Very well, I'll bring it. ... Now I know what to do with my revolver. [*Picks up his guitar and goes, twanging it.*]

YASHA. Two-and-twenty misfortunes! He's a stupid fellow, between you and me. [*Yawns.*]

DOONIASHA. I hope to God he won't shoot himself. [*Pause.*] I've got sort of anxious, worrying all the time. I came to live here with the Master and Mistress when I was still a little girl you see. Now I've got out of the way of living a simple life, and my hands are as white ... as white as a young lady's. I've grown sensitive and delicate, just as if I was one of the nobility; I'm afraid of everything. ... Just afraid. If you deceive me, Yasha, I don't know what will happen to my nerves.

YASHA [*kisses her*]. Little peach! Mind you, a girl ought to keep herself in hand, you know. Personally I dislike it more than anything if a girl doesn't behave herself.

DOONIASHA. I love you so much, so much! You're educated, you can reason about everything.

[*Pause.*]

YASHA [*yawns*]. Y-yes. ... To my way of thinking, it's like this: if a girl loves somebody, it means she's immoral.

[*Pause.*] It's nice to smoke a cigar in the open air. ... [*Listens.*] Someone's coming this way. Our ladies and gentlemen. ... [DOONIASHA *impulsively puts her arms round him.*] Go home now, as if you'd been down to the river bathing; go by this path, or you'll meet them, and they might think I've been keeping company with you. I couldn't stand that.

DOONIASHA [*coughing softly*]. My head's aching from that cigar. ... [*Goes out.*]

[YASHA *remains sitting by the shrine. Enter* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA, GAYEV *and* LOPAKHIN.]

LOPAKHIN. We must decide once and for all: time won't wait. After all, my question's quite a simple one. Do you consent to lease your land for villas, or don't you? You can answer in one word: yes or no? Just one word!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Who's been smoking such abominable cigars here? [*Sits down.*]

GAYEV. How very convenient it is having a railway here. [*Sits down.*] Here we are – we've been up to town for lunch and we're back home already. I pot the red into the middle pocket! I'd like to go indoors now and have just one game. ...

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. You've plenty of time.

LOPAKHIN. Just one word! [*Beseechingly.*] Do give me an answer!

GAYEV [*yawns*]. What do you say?

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*looking into her purse*]. Yesterday I had a lot of money, but today there's hardly any left. My poor Varia is feeding everyone on milk soups to economize; the old servants in the kitchen get nothing but dried peas to eat, and here I am, spending money senselessly, I don't know why. ... [*She drops the purse, scattering gold coins.*] Now I've scattered it all over the place. ... [*Annoyed.*]

YASHA. Allow me, Madam, I'll pick them up in a minute. [*Gathers up the money.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Thank you, Yasha. ... Why did I go out to lunch? It was quite vile, that restaurant of yours, with its beastly music; and the table-cloths smelt of soap, too. ... Need one drink so much, Lionia? Need one eat so much? And talk so much? Today at the restaurant you talked too much again, and it was all so pointless. About the seventies, about the decadents. And who to? Fancy talking about the decadents to the restaurant waiters!

LOPAKHIN. Yes, fancy.

GAYEV [*waving his hand*]. I'm hopeless, I know. [*To* YASHA, *with irritation*.] Why are you always buzzing about in front of me?

YASHA [*laughs*]. I can never hear you talk without laughing.

GAYEV [*to his sister*]. Either he goes, or I do. ...

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Go away, Yasha, go along.

YASHA [*hands the purse to* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA]. I'll go now. [*He can hardly restrain his laughter*.] This very minute. ... [*Goes out*.]

LOPAKHIN. You know, that wealthy fellow Deriganov, he's intending to buy your estate. They say he's coming to the auction himself.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Where did you hear that?

LOPAKHIN. They were saying so in town.

GAYEV. Our Aunt in Yaroslavl promised to send us money but when and how much it will be we don't know.

LOPAKHIN. How much will she send you? A hundred thousand? Two hundred?

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Well, hardly. ... Ten or twelve thousand, perhaps. We'll be thankful for that much.

LOPAKHIN. You must forgive me for saying it, but really I've never met such feckless, unbusiness-like, queer people as you are. You are told in plain language that your estate is up for sale, and you simply don't seem to understand it.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. But what are we to do? Tell us, what?

LOPAKHIN. I keep on telling you. Every day I tell you the same thing. You must lease the cherry orchard and the land for villas, and you must do it now, as soon as possible. The auction is going to be held almost at once. Please do try to understand! Once you definitely decide to have the villas, you'll be able to borrow as much money as you like, and then you'll be out of the wood.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Villas and summer visitors! Forgive me, but it's so vulgar.

GAYEV. I absolutely agree with you.

LOPAKHIN. Honestly, I feel I shall burst into tears, or shriek, or fall down and faint. I simply can't stand it. You've literally worn me out. [*To* GAYEV.] An old woman, that's what you are!

GAYEV. What's that?

LOPAKHIN. An old woman!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*alarmed*]. No, don't go, do stay, my dear. Please stay! Perhaps we could think of something.

LOPAKHIN. It hardly seems worth trying.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Don't go, please! Somehow it's more cheerful with you here. [*Pause.*] I keep expecting something dreadful to happen ... as if the house were going to fall down on us.

GAYEV [*in deep thought*]. I cannon off the cushions! I pot into the middle pocket. ...

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. We've sinned too much. ...

LOPAKHIN. Sinned, indeed! What were your sins?

GAYEV [*puts a sweet into his mouth*]. They say I've eaten up my whole fortune in sweets. [*Laughs.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Oh, my sins! Look at the way I've always squandered money, continually. It was sheer madness. And then I got married to a man who only knew

how to get into debt. Champagne killed him – he was a terrific drinker – and then, worse luck I fell in love with someone else. We had an affair, and just at that very time – it was my first punishment, a blow straight to my heart – my little boy was drowned here, in this river ... and then I went abroad. I went away for good, and never meant to return, I never meant to see the river again ... I just shut my eyes and ran away in a frenzy of grief, but *he* ... he followed me. It was so cruel and brutal of him! I bought a villa near Mentone because he fell ill there, you see, and for three years I never had any rest, day or night. He was a sick man, he quite wore me out; my soul seemed to dry right up. Then, last year when the villa had to be sold to pay the debts, I went to Paris, and there he robbed me and left me; he went away and lived with another woman. ... I tried to poison myself. ... It was all so foolish, so shameful! And then suddenly I felt an urge to come back to Russia, to my own country and my little girl. ... [*Wipes away her tears.*] Oh, Lord, Lord, be merciful, forgive me my sins! Don't punish me any more! [*Takes a telegram out of her pocket.*] I had this from Paris today. He's asking my forgiveness, begging me to return. ... [*Tears up the telegram.*] Sounds like music somewhere. [*Listens.*]

GAYEV. That's our famous Jewish band. Do you remember, four violins, a flute and a contrabass?

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Is that still in existence? It would be nice to get them to come to the house one day, and we could have a little dance.

LOPAKHIN [*listens*]. I can't hear anything. ... [*Sings quietly.*] 'And the Germans, if you pay, will turn Russian into Frenchman, so they say.' ... [*Laughs.*] I saw such a good play at the theatre yesterday. Very amusing.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. I'm sure it wasn't at all amusing. Instead of going to see plays, you should take a good look

at yourself. Just think what a drab kind of life you lead, what a lot of nonsense you talk!

LOPAKHIN. It's perfectly true. Yes, I admit it, we lead an idiotic existence. ... [*Pause.*] My Dad was a peasant, a blockhead, he didn't understand anything, and he didn't teach me anything, but just beat me when he was drunk, and always with a stick at that. As a matter of fact, I'm just as much of a fool and a half-wit myself. No one taught me anything, my writing is awful, I'm ashamed even to show it to people: it's just like a pig's.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. You ought to get married, my friend.

LOPAKHIN. Yes. ... That's true.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. You ought to marry our Varia. She's a nice girl.

LOPAKHIN. Yes.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. She comes from the common folk, and she's a hard-working girl: she can work the whole day without stopping. But the main thing is that she loves you, and you've been attracted by her for a long time yourself.

LOPAKHIN. Well. ... I'm quite willing. ... She's a nice girl.

[*Pause.*]

GAYEV. I've been offered a job at the bank. Six thousand a year. Have you heard?

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Indeed I have. You'd better stay where you are.

[*Enter* FEERS *with an overcoat.*]

FEERS [*to* GAYEV]. Will you please put it on, Sir, it's so chilly.

GAYEV [*puts on the overcoat*]. You *are* a nuisance.

FEERS. Tut, tut! You went off this morning and never told me you were going. [*Looks him over.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. How you've aged, Feers!

FEERS. What can I get you, Madam?

LOPAKHIN. They say, you've aged a lot.

FEERS. I've been alive a long time. They were going to marry me off before your Dad was born. [*Laughs.*] And when Freedom was granted to the people, I'd already been made a chief valet. I wouldn't take my Freedom then, I stayed with the Master and Mistress. ... [*Pause.*] I remember everyone was glad at the time, but what they were glad about, no one knew.

LOPAKHIN. Oh, yes, it was a good life all right! At least, people got flogged!

FEERS [*not having heard him*]. Rather! The peasants belonged to the gentry, and the gentry belonged to the peasants; but now everything's separate, and you can't understand anything.

GAYEV. Be quiet, Feers. Tomorrow I must go to town. I was promised an introduction to some general or other who'll lend us some money on a promissory note.

LOPAKHIN. Nothing will come of that. And you won't be able to pay the interest, anyway.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. He's talking through his hat. There aren't any generals.

[*Enter* TROFIMOV, ANIA *and* VARIA.]

GAYEV. Here come the children.

ANIA. There's Mamma.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Come here, my dears. My dear children. ... [*Embraces* ANIA *and* VARIA.] If you both only knew how much I love you! Sit down beside me, here.

[*All sit down.*]

LOPAKHIN. Our 'eternal student' is always with the young ladies.

TROFIMOV. It's none of your business, anyway.

LOPAKHIN. He'll soon be fifty, yet he's still a student.

TROFIMOV. I wish you'd drop your idiotic jokes.

LOPAKHIN. But why are you getting annoyed? You *are* a queer chap!

TROFIMOV. Why do you keep pestering me?

LOPAKHIN [*laughs*]. Just let me ask you one question: what do you make of me?

TROFIMOV. My opinion of you, Yermolai Aleksyeevich, is simply this: you're a wealthy man, and before long you'll be a millionaire; and in so far as a wild beast is necessary because it devours everything in its path and so converts one kind of matter into another, you are necessary also.

[*Everybody laughs.*]

VARIA. You'd better tell us about the planets, Pyetia.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. No, let's continue what we were talking about yesterday.

TROFIMOV. What were we talking about?

GAYEV. About pride.

TROFIMOV. We talked a lot yesterday, but we didn't agree on anything. The proud man, in the sense you understand him, has something mystical about him. Maybe you're right in a way, but if we try to think it out simply, without being too far-fetched about it, the question arises – why should he be proud? Where's the sense in being proud when you consider that Man, as a species, is not very well constructed physiologically, and, in the vast majority of cases is coarse, stupid, and profoundly unhappy, too? We ought to stop all this self-admiration. We ought to – just work.

GAYEV. You'll die just the same, whatever you do.

TROFIMOV. Who knows? And anyway, what does it mean – to die? It may be that Man is possessed of a hundred senses, and only the five that are known to us perish in death, while the remaining ninety-five live on afterwards.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. How clever you are, Pyetia!

LOPAKHIN [*ironically*]. Oh, awfully clever!

TROFIMOV. Humanity is perpetually advancing, always seeking to perfect its own powers. One day all the things that are beyond our grasp at present are going to fall

within our reach, only to achieve this we've got to work with all our might, to help the people who are seeking after truth. Here, in Russia, very few people have started to work, so far. Nearly all the members of the intelligentsia that I know care for nothing, do nothing and are still incapable of work. They call themselves 'intelligentsia', but they still talk contemptuously to their servants, they treat the peasants as if they were animals, they study without achieving anything, they don't read anything serious, they just do nothing. As for science, they only talk about it, and they don't understand much about art either. They all look very grave and go about with grim expressions on their faces, and they only discuss important matters and philosophize. Yet all the time anyone can see that our work-people are abominably fed and have to sleep without proper beds, thirty to forty to a room, with bed-bugs, bad smells, damp, and immorality everywhere. It's perfectly obvious that all our nice-sounding talk is intended only to mislead ourselves and others. Tell me then, where are the crèches which we're always talking about, where are the reading rooms? We only write about them in novels, but actually there just aren't any. There's nothing but dirt, bestiality, Asiatic customs. ... I'm afraid of these deadly serious faces, I don't like them; I'm afraid of serious talk. It would be better for us just to keep quiet.

LOPAKHIN. Well, let me tell you that *I'm* up soon after four every morning, and I work from morning till night. I always have money in hand, my own and other people's, and I have plenty of opportunities to learn what the people around me are like. You only have to start on a job of work to realize how few honest, decent people there are about. Sometimes, when I can't sleep, I start brooding over it. The Lord God has given us vast forests, immense fields, wide horizons; surely we ought to be giants, living in such a country as this. ...

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Whatever do you want giants for? They're all right in fairy-tales, otherwise they're just terrifying.

[YEPIHODOV *crosses the stage in the background, playing his guitar.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*pensively*]. There goes Yepihodov....

ANIA [*pensively*]. There goes Yepihodov....

GAYEV. The sun's gone down, ladies and gentlemen.

TROFIMOV. Yes.

GAYEV [*in a subdued voice, as if reciting a poem*]. Oh, glorious Nature, shining with eternal light, so beautiful, yet so indifferent to our fate ... you, whom we call Mother, uniting in yourself both Life and Death, you live and you destroy....

VARIA [*imploringly*]. Uncle, dear!

ANIA. You're starting again, Uncle!

TROFIMOV. You'd better screw back off the red into the middle pocket.

GAYEV. I'll keep quiet, I'll keep quiet.

[*They all sit deep in thought; the silence is only broken by the subdued muttering of* FEERS. *Suddenly a distant sound is heard, coming as if out of the sky, like the sound of a string snapping, slowly and sadly dying away.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. What was that?

LOPAKHIN. I don't know. Somewhere a long way off a lift cable in one of the mines must have broken. But it must be somewhere very far away.

GAYEV. Or perhaps it was some bird ... a heron, perhaps.

TROFIMOV. Or an owl....

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*shudders*]. It sounded unpleasant, somehow....

[*A pause.*]

FEERS. It was the same before the misfortune: the owl hooted and the samovar kept singing.

GAYEV. What misfortune?

FEERS. Before they gave us Freedom.

[*A pause.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Come along, my friends! Let us go home, it's getting dark. [*To* ANIA.] You've got tears in your eyes. [What is it, my little one? [*Embraces her.*]

ANIA. Never mind, Mamma. It's nothing.

TROFIMOV. Someone's coming.

[*Enter* A TRAMP *in a white battered peaked cap and an overcoat; he is slightly tipsy.*]

THE TRAMP. Excuse me, can I get straight to the station through here?

GAYEV. You can. Follow the road.

THE TRAMP. I'm greatly obliged to you, Sir. [*Coughs.*] Lovely weather today. [*Recites.*] 'Oh, my brother, my suffering brother! ... Come to mother Volga, whose groans. ...' [*To* VARIA.] Mademoiselle, may a starving Russian citizen trouble you for a few coppers?

[VARIA *cries out, frightened.*]

LOPAKHIN [*angrily*]. Really, there's a limit to everything!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*at a loss what to do*]. Take this ... here you are. [*Searches in her purse.*] I have no silver. ... Never mind, here's a gold one. ...

THE TRAMP. I'm deeply grateful to you! [*Goes off.*]

[*Laughter.*]

VARIA [*frightened*]. I'm going. ... I'm going. ... Oh, Mamma dear, you know there's no food in the house, and you gave him all that!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Well, what can you do with a fool like me? I'll give you all I've got when we get home. Yermolai Aleksyeevich, you'll lend me some more, won't you?

LOPAKHIN. Certainly I will.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Let's go on now, it's time. By the

way, Varia, we almost fixed up your marriage just now. I congratulate you.

VARIA [*through her tears*]. It's no laughing matter, Mamma!

LOPAKHIN. Go to a nunnery, Ohmelia! ...

GAYEV. Look how my hands are trembling: I haven't played billiards for a long time.

LOPAKHIN. Ohmelia, oh nymph, remember me in thy orisons!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Come along, everybody. It's almost supper time.

VARIA. That man scared me so. My heart keeps thumping.

LOPAKHIN. My friends, just one word, please just one word: on the twenty-second of August the cherry orchard is going to be sold. Just consider that! Just think. ...

[*All go out, except* TROFIMOV *and* ANIA.]

ANIA [*laughs*]. Thank the tramp for this! He frightened Varia, now we are alone.

TROFIMOV. Varia's afraid – afraid we might suddenly fall in love with each other – so she follows us about all day long. She's so narrow-minded, she can't grasp that we are above falling in love. To rid ourselves of all that's petty and unreal, all that prevents us from being happy and free, that's the whole aim and meaning of our life. Forward! Let's march on irresistibly towards that bright star over there, shining in the distance! Forward! Don't fall behind, friends!

ANIA [*raising her hands*]. How well you talk! [*A pause.*] It's wonderful here today.

TROFIMOV. Yes, the weather's marvellous.

ANIA. What have you done to me, Pyetia? Why is it that I don't love the cherry orchard as I used to? I used to love it so dearly, it seemed to me that there wasn't a better place in all the world than our orchard.

TROFIMOV. The whole of Russia is our orchard. The earth is great and beautiful and there are many, many wonderful

places on it. [*A pause.*] Just think, Ania: your grandfather, your great grandfather and all your forefathers were serf owners – they owned living souls. Don't you see human beings gazing at you from every cherry tree in your orchard, from every leaf and every tree-trunk, don't you hear voices? ... They owned living souls – and it has perverted you all, those who came before you, and you who are living now, so that your mother, your uncle and even you yourself no longer realize that you're living in debt, at other people's expense, at the expense of people you don't admit further than the kitchen. We are at least two hundred years behind the times; we still have no real background, no clear attitude to our past, we just philosophize and complain of depression, or drink vodka. Yet it's perfectly clear that to begin to live in the present, we must first atone for our past and be finished with it, and we can only atone for it by suffering, by extraordinary, unceasing exertion. You must understand this, Ania.

ANIA. The house we live in hasn't really been ours for a long time. I'll leave it, I give you my word.

TROFIMOV. Leave it, and if you have any keys to it, throw them down a well. Be free like the wind.

ANIA [*in rapture*]. How well you put it!

TROFIMOV. You must believe me, Ania, you must. I'm not thirty yet, I'm young, and I'm still a student, but I've suffered so much already. As soon as the winter comes, I get half-starved, and ill, and worried, poor as a beggar, and there's hardly anywhere I haven't been to, where I haven't been driven to by Fate. And yet, always, every moment of the day and night my soul has been filled with such marvellous hopes and visions. I can see happiness, Ania, I can see it coming. ...

ANIA [*pensively*]. The moon's coming up.

[YEPIHODOV *can be heard playing his guitar, the same melancholy tune as before. The moon rises. Somewhere in the*

vicinity of the poplars VARIA *is looking for* ANIA *and calling: 'Ania! Where are you?'*]

TROFIMOV. Yes, the moon is rising. [*A pause.*] There it is – happiness – it's coming nearer and nearer, I seem to hear its footsteps. And if we don't see it, if we don't know when it comes, what does it matter? Other people will see it!

VARIA'S VOICE. Ania! Where are you?

TROFIMOV. That Varia again! [*Angrily.*] It's disgusting!

ANIA. Well? Let us go to the river. It's nice there.

TROFIMOV. Let's go.

[TROFIMOV *and* ANIA *go out.*]

VARIA'S VOICE. Ania! Ania!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

[*The drawing-room of the Ranyevskaia's house. Adjoining the drawing-room at the back, and connected to it by an archway, is the ballroom. A Jewish band, the same that was mentioned in Act II, is heard playing in the hall. It is evening; the candles in a chandelier are alight. In the ballroom a party is dancing the Grand-Rond.* SIMEONOV-PISHCHIK *is heard to call out: 'Promenade à une paire!', then all come into the drawing-room.* PISHCHIK *and* CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA *form the leading couple, then come* TROFIMOV *and* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA, ANIA *with a post-office clerk,* VARIA *with the station-master, and so on.* VARIA *cries quietly and wipes away her tears as she dances.* DOONIASHA *is in the last couple. They walk across the drawing-room.* PISHCHIK *shouts: 'Grand rond balancez!' and 'Les cavaliers à genoux et remerciez vos dames!'*

FEERS, *wearing a tail-coat, crosses the room with soda-water on a tray.* PISHCHIK *and* TROFIMOV *re-enter the drawing-room.*]

PISHCHIK. I've got this high blood-pressure – I've had a stroke twice already, you know – and it makes dancing difficult; but if you're one of a pack, as the saying goes, you've got to wag your tail, whether you bark or not. Actually I'm as strong as a horse. My dear father – he liked his little joke, God bless him – he used to say that the ancient family of Simeonov-Pishchik was descended from the very same horse that Caligula sat in the Senate. [*Sits down.*] But the trouble is, we've no money. A hungry dog can only think about food. ... [*Falls asleep and snores, but wakes up almost at once.*] Just like myself – I can't think of anything but money. ...

TROFIMOV. It's quite true, there *is* something horsy about your build.

PISHCHIK. Oh, well, the horse is a good animal, you can sell a horse....

[*From the adjoining room comes the sound of someone playing billiards.* VARIA *appears in the ballroom, under the arch.*]

TROFIMOV [*teasing her*]. Madame Lopakhin! Madame Lopakhin!

VARIA [*angrily*]. The 'moth-eaten gent'!

TROFIMOV. Yes, I am a moth-eaten gent, and I'm proud of it.

VARIA [*brooding bitterly*]. So now we've hired a band – but how are we going to pay for it? [*Goes out.*]

TROFIMOV [*to* PISHCHIK]. If all the energy you've wasted in the course of a life-time looking for money to pay interest on your debts – if all that energy had been used for something else, you'd probably have turned the world upside down by now.

PISHCHIK. The philosopher Nietzsche, the greatest, the most famous – a man of the highest intellect, in fact – says it's justifiable to forge bank-notes.

TROFIMOV. Have you read Nietzsche then?

PISHCHIK. Well, no. ... Dashenka told me. But just now I'm in such a frightful position that I wouldn't mind forging a few bank-notes. The day after tomorrow I've got to pay three hundred and ten roubles. I've borrowed one hundred and thirty already. ... [*Feels in his pockets with alarm.*] The money's gone! I've lost the money. [*Tearfully.*] Where's the money? [*With an expression of joy.*] Here it is, inside the lining! The shock's made me sweat!...

[*Enter* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA *and* CHARLOTTA.]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*singing 'Lezghinka'*[1] *under her breath*]. Why is Leonid so late? What's he doing in town? [*To* DOONIASHA.] Dooniasha, offer the musicians some tea.

1. A popular dance tune.

TROFIMOV. I suppose the auction didn't take place.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. The band came at the wrong time, and the party started at the wrong time.... Well... never mind.... [*Sits down and sings quietly.*]

CHARLOTTA [*hands a pack of cards to* PISHCHIK]. Here's a pack of cards – think of any card, now.

PISHCHIK. I've thought of one.

CHARLOTTA. Now shuffle the pack. That's right. Now give it to me, my good Monsieur Pishchik. *Ein, zwei, drei!* Now look for it. There it is, in your breast pocket.

PISHCHIK [*takes the card out of his breast-pocket*]. The eight of spades, absolutely right! [*In astonishment.*] Fancy that!

CHARLOTTA [*holding the pack of cards on the palm of her hand, to* TROFIMOV]. Tell me quickly, which card is on top?

TROFIMOV. Well.... Let us say, the queen of spades.

CHARLOTTA. Here it is! [*She claps her hand over the pack of cards, which disappears.*] What fine weather we're having today!

[*A woman's voice, apparently coming from beneath the floor, answers her: 'Oh yes, Madam, the weather's perfectly marvellous!'*]

CHARLOTTA [*addressing the voice*]. How charming you are, quite delightful!

VOICE. And I like you very much also Madam.

STATION-MASTER [*applauding*]. Madame ventriloquist, well done!

PISHCHIK [*astonished*]. Fancy that! Charlotta Ivanovna, how fascinating you are! I'm quite in love with you!

CHARLOTTA [*shrugging her shoulders*]. In love? Do you know how to love? *Guter Mensch, aber schlechter Musikant.*

TROFIMOV [*slaps* PISHCHIK *on the shoulder*]. A regular old horse!

CHARLOTTA. Attention please! Here's just one more trick.

[She takes a rug from a chair.] Now I'm offering this very nice rug for sale. ... *[Shakes it out.]* Would anyone like to buy it?

PISHCHIK *[astonished]*. Just fancy!

CHARLOTTA. *Ein, zwei, drei! [She lifts up the rug and discloses* ANIA *standing behind it;* ANIA *drops a curtsey, runs to her mother, gives her a hug, then runs back into the ballroom. Everyone is delighted.]*

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA *[clapping]*. Bravo, bravo!

CHARLOTTA. Just once more. *Ein, zwei, drei! [Lifts the rug; behind it stands* VARIA, *who bows.]*

PISHCHIK *[astonished]*. Fancy that!

CHARLOTTA. Finished! *[She throws the rug over* PISHCHIK, *curtseys and runs off to the ballroom.]*

PISHCHIK *[hurries after her]*. The little rascal! ... Have you ever seen anything like it ... have you ever. ... *[Goes out.]*

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Still no Leonid. I can't understand what he's doing all this time in town. In any case, everything must be over by now, either the estate's been sold or the auction never took place. Why must he keep us in ignorance so long?

VARIA *[trying to comfort her]*. Uncle bought it, dear Uncle, I'm sure he did.

TROFIMOV *[sarcastically]*. Oh yes?

VARIA. Grandmamma sent him power of attorney to buy the estate in her name, and transfer the mortgage to her. She's done it for Ania's sake. ... God will help us, I'm sure of it – Uncle will buy the estate.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Grandmamma sent us fifteen thousand roubles to buy the estate in her name –she doesn't trust us, you see – but the money wouldn't even pay the interest. *[She covers her face with her hands.]* Today my fate is being decided, my fate. ...

TROFIMOV *[to* VARIA, *teasingly]*. Madame Lopakhin!

VARIA [*crossly*]. The eternal student! Why, you've been thrown out of the University twice already!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Why get so cross, Varia? He does tease you about Lopakhin, but what's the harm? If you feel inclined to, why don't you marry Lopakhin: he's a nice, interesting fellow. Of course, if you don't feel like it, don't. No one's trying to force you, darling.

VARIA. I do take it very seriously, Mamma dear ... and I want to be frank with you about it ... he's a nice man and I like him.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Then marry him. What are you waiting for? I can't understand you.

VARIA. Mamma darling, I can't propose to him myself, can I? It's two years now since everyone started talking to me about him, and everyone is still doing it, but he either says nothing, or else he just talks in a sort of bantering way. I understand what's the matter. He's getting rich, he's occupied with his business, and he's no time for me. If only I had some money, just a little, even a hundred roubles, then I'd have left everything and gone away, the farther the better. I'd have gone into a convent.

TROFIMOV. A beautiful life!

VARIA [*to* TROFIMOV]. Of course, a student like you has to be clever! [*Softly and tearfully.*] How plain you've become, Pyetia, how much older you look! [*To* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA, *her tearfulness gone.*] The only thing I can't bear, Mamma dear, is to be without work. I must be doing something all the time.

[*Enter* YASHA.]

YASHA [*with difficulty restraining his laughter*]. Yepihodov's broken a billiard cue! ... [*Goes out.*]

VARIA. But why is Yepihodov here? Who allowed him to play billiards? I can't understand these people.... [*Goes out.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Don't tease her, Pyetia. Don't you see she's upset already?

TROFIMOV. She's too much of a busy-body, she will poke her nose into other people's affairs. She wouldn't leave us alone the whole summer, neither Ania, nor me. She was afraid we might fall in love with each other. Why should she mind? Besides, I didn't show any sign of it. I'm too far removed from such trivialities. We are above love!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. And I suppose I'm below love. [*In great agitation.*] Why isn't Leonid back? I only want to know whether the estate's sold or not. Such a calamity seems so incredible that somehow I don't even know what to think, I feel quite lost. Honestly, I feel I could shriek out loud this very moment.... I shall be doing something silly. Help me, Pyetia. Say something, speak!

TROFIMOV. Isn't it all the same whether the estate's sold today or not? It's finished and done with long ago, there's no turning back, the bridges are burnt. You must keep calm, my dear; you mustn't deceive yourself, for once in your life you must look the truth straight in the face.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. What truth? *You* can see where the truth is and where it isn't, but I seem to have lost my power of vision, I don't see anything. You're able to solve all your problems in a resolute way – but, tell me, my dear boy, isn't that because you're young, because you're not old enough yet to have suffered on account of your problems. You look ahead so boldly – but isn't that because life is still hidden from your young eyes, so that you're not able to foresee anything dreadful, or expect it? You've a more courageous and honest and serious nature than we have, but do consider our position carefully, do be generous – even if only a little bit – and spare me. I was born here, you know, my father and mother lived here, and my grandfather, too, and I love this house – I can't conceive life without the cherry orchard, and if it really has to be sold, then sell me with it. ... [*Embraces* TROFIMOV,

kisses him on the forehead.] You know, my son was drowned here. ... [*Weeps.*] Have pity on me, my dear, dear friend.

TROFIMOV. You know that I sympathize with you with all my heart.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. But you must say it differently ... differently. [*Takes out a handkerchief; a telegram falls on to the floor.*] There's such a weigh ton my mind today, you can't imagine. This place is too noisy, my very soul seems to shudder with every sound, and I'm trembling all over – yet I can't go to my room for fear of being alone and quiet. ... Don't blame me, Pyetia. ... I love you as if you were my own child. I would willingly let Ania marry you, honestly I would, but, my dear boy, you must study, you must finish your course. You don't do anything, Fate seems to drive you from one place to another – such a strange thing. ... Isn't it? Isn't it? And you should do something about your beard, make it grow somehow. ... [*Laughs.*] You are a funny boy!

TROFIMOV [*picks up the telegram*]. I don't want to be a dandy.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. That telegram's from Paris. I get one every day. ... Yesterday and today. That savage is ill again, and things are going badly with him. ... He wants me to forgive him, implores me to return, and, really, I do feel I ought to go to Paris and stay near him for a bit. You're looking very stern, Pyetia, but what's to be done, my dear boy, what am I to do? He's ill, and lonely, and unhappy, and who's there to take care of him, to prevent him from making a fool of himself, and give him his medicine at the proper time? And anyway, why should I hide it, or keep quiet about it? I love him, of course I love him. I do, I do. ... It's a millstone round my neck, and I'm going to the bottom with it – but I love him and I can't live without him. [*She presses* TROFIMOV'*s hand.*]

Don't think badly of me, Pyetia, don't speak, don't say anything....

TROFIMOV [*with strong emotion*]. Please – please forgive my frankness, but that man's been robbing you!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. No, no, no, you mustn't talk like that.... [*Puts her hands over her ears.*]

TROFIMOV. He's a cad, you're the only one who doesn't know it! He's a petty-minded cad, a worthless ...

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*angry, but in control of herself*]. You're twenty-six or twenty-seven years old, but you're still like a schoolboy in a prep school!

TROFIMOV. Never mind me!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. You ought to be a man, at your age you ought to understand people who are in love. And you ought to be able to love ... to fall in love! [*Angrily.*] Yes, yes! And you're not 'pure', but you just make a fad of purity, you're a ridiculous crank, a freak....

TROFIMOV [*horrified*]. What is she saying?

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. 'I'm above love!' You're not above love, you're daft, as our Feers would say. Not to have a mistress at your age!...

TROFIMOV [*horrified*]. This is dreadful! What's she saying? [*Walks quickly towards the ballroom, his head between his hands.*] This is dreadful.... I can't, I'm going.... [*Goes out, but returns at once.*] Everything's finished between us! [*Goes out through the door into the hall.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*calls after him*]. Pyetia, wait! You funny fellow, I was joking! Pyetia!

[*From the hall comes the sound of someone running quickly upstairs, then falling down with a crash. There are shrieks from* ANIA *and* VARIA, *followed by laughter.*]

What's happened?

[ANIA *runs in.*]

ANIA [*laughing*]. Pyetia's fallen downstairs. [*Runs out.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. What a queer fellow he is!

[*The* STATION-MASTER *stands in the middle of the ballroom and begins to recite 'The Sinner' by Alexyei Tolstoy. The others listen, but he has hardly had time to recite more than a few lines when the sound of a waltz reaches them from the hall, and the recitation breaks off. Everyone dances. Enter from the hall:* TROFIMOV, ANIA, VARIA.]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Now, Pyetia ... there, my dear boy ... I ask your forgiveness ... let's dance. ... [*She dances with* PYETIA.]

[ANIA *and* VARIA *dance.*]

[*Enter* FEERS, *then* YASHA. FEERS *stands his walking stick by the side door.* YASHA *looks at the dancers from the drawing-room.*]

YASHA. How goes it, Grandad?

FEERS. I'm not too well. ... We used to have generals, barons, and admirals dancing at our balls, but now we send for the post-office clerk and the station-master, and even they don't come too willingly. I seem to have grown so weak somehow. ... My old master, that's the mistress's grandfather, used to give everyone powdered sealing wax for medicine, whatever the illness was. I've been taking it every day for the last twenty years, or perhaps even longer. Maybe that's why I'm still alive.

YASHA. How you weary me, Grandad! [*Yawns.*] I wish you'd go away and die soon.

FEERS. Eh, you! ... You're daft. ... [*Mutters.*]

[TROFIMOV *and* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA *dance in the ballroom, then in the drawing-room.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Thank you. I'd like to sit down for a bit. [*Sits down.*] I'm tired.

[*Enter* ANIA.]

ANIA [*agitated*]. A man in the kitchen was saying just now that the cherry orchard was sold today.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Sold? Who to?

ANIA. He didn't say. He's gone. [*She dances with* TROFIMOV; *both go to the ballroom.*]

YASHA. There was some old man there, gossiping away. A stranger.

FEERS. And Leonid Andryeevich's not back yet, he's still not back. He's only got his light overcoat on – his 'between-seasons' coat – and he might easily catch a cold. These youngsters!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. I feel as though I'm going to die. Yasha, go and find out who bought it.

YASHA. But the old man's been gone a long time. [*Laughs.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*with a touch of annoyance*]. Well, what are you laughing at? What are you so happy about?

YASHA. Yepihodov's such a comic chap – a stupid fellow. Two-and-twenty misfortunes!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Feers, if the estate is sold, where will you go?

FEERS. I'll go wherever you order me to.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Why are you looking like that? Are you ill? I should go to bed, you know....

FEERS. Yes.... [*With a faint smile.*] If I went to bed, who'd wait on the guests, who'd keep things going? There's no one in the house but me.

YASHA [*to* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA]. Liubov Andryeevna! I want to ask you for something, please! If you go to Paris again, do me a favour and take me with you. It's quite impossible for me to stay here. [*Looking round, in a subdued voice.*] There's no need for me to say it: you can see it for yourself – the people are uneducated, and they're immoral, too. Besides, it's so boring, and the food they give you in the kitchen is abominable. Then this Feers keeps on walking around and muttering all sorts of silly things. Take me with you, please do!

[*Enter* PISHCHIK.]

PISHCHIK. Allow me to ask you for a dance, beautiful

lady. ... [LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA *gets up to dance.*] I'll have that hundred and eighty roubles from you all the same, my charmer. ... Yes, I will. ... [*Dances.*] Just one hundred and eighty roubles, that's all. ...

[*They go into the ballroom.*]

YASHA [*sings quietly*]. 'Will you understand the agitation of my soul? ...'

[*In the ballroom a woman in check trousers and a grey top hat starts jumping in the air and throwing her arms about; there are shouts of: 'Bravo, Charlotta Ivanovna!'*]

DOONIASHA [*stops to powder her face*]. The young mistress ordered me to dance: there are so many gentlemen and only a few ladies; but I get so dizzy from dancing, and my heart beats too fast. Feers Nikolayevich, the post-office clerk told me something just now that quite took my breath away.

[*The music stops.*]

FEERS. What did he tell you?

DOONIASHA. You are like a flower, he said.

YASHA [*yawns*]. What ignorance! ... [*Goes out.*]

DOONIASHA. Like a flower. ... I'm so sensitive, I love it when people say nice things to me.

FEERS. You'll get your head turned all right.

[*Enter* YEPIHODOV.]

YEPIHODOV. Avdotyia Fiodorovna, you don't seem to want to look at me ... as if I were some sort of insect. [*Sighs.*] What a life!

DOONIASHA. What is it you want?

YEPIHODOV. Perhaps you may be right, no doubt. [*Sighs.*] But, of course, if one looks at it from a certain point of view – if I may so express myself – forgive my frankness – you've driven me into such a state. ... I know what my fate is; every day some misfortune's sure to happen to me, but I've been so long accustomed to it, that I look at life with a smile. You gave me your word, and though I ...

DOONIASHA. Please, please, let's have a talk later, but now leave me alone. I feel in a kind of dream just now. [*Plays with her fan.*]

YEPIHODOV. Some misfortune or other happens to me every day, and yet – if I may so express myself – I only smile, I even laugh.

[VARIA *enters from the ballroom.*]

VARIA. Haven't you gone yet, Semion? What an ill-mannered fellow you are, really! [*To* DOONIASHA.] You'd better go, Dooniasha. [*To* YEPIHODOV.] First you go and play billiards and break a cue, and now you're walking about the drawing-room, like a visitor.

YEPIHODOV. Permit me to inform you that you can't start imposing penalties on me.

VARIA. I'm not imposing penalties, I'm merely telling you. All you do is to walk from one place to another, instead of getting on with your work. We keep a clerk, but what for no one knows.

YEPIHODOV [*offended*]. Whether I work, walk about, eat or play billiards, the only people who are entitled to judge my actions are those who are older than me and know what they're talking about.

VARIA. You dare say that to me? [*Flying into a temper.*] You dare to say that? You're suggesting I don't know what I'm talking about? Get out of here! This very minute!

YEPIHODOV [*cowed*]. I wish you'd express yourself more delicately.

VARIA [*beside herself*]. Get out this minute! Out!

[*He goes to the door, she follows him.*]

Two-and-twenty misfortunes! I don't want any more of you here! I don't want ever to set eyes on you again!

[YEPIHODOV *goes out; his voice is heard from outside the door: 'I'll complain about you.'*]

Ah, you're coming back, are you? [*She seizes the stick which* FEERS *left by the door.*] Come along, come along ...

I'll show you! Ah, you're coming back ... are you? There, I'll give it to you. ... [*Swings the stick, and at that moment* LOPAKHIN *enters.*]

LOPAKHIN [*whom the stick did not, in fact, touch*]. Thank you very much!

VARIA [*angry and sarcastic*]. I beg your pardon!

LOPAKHIN. Don't mention it. Thanks for a pleasant surprise.

VARIA. It's not worth thanking me for. [*Goes to the side, then looks round and says gently.*] I haven't hurt you, have I?

LOPAKHIN. No, not at all. ... There's a huge bump coming up, though.

VOICES IN THE BALLROOM. Lopakhin's arrived! Yermolai Aleksyeevich!

PISHCHIK. Look here, you can see him, you can hear him! ... [*Embraces* LOPAKHIN.] You smell of cognac, my dear fellow, my bonny boy! We're making merry here, too.

[*Enter* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA.]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. It's you, Yermolai Aleksyeevich? Why have you been so long? Where is Leonid?

LOPAKHIN. Leonid Andryeevich returned with me, he's coming along.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*agitated*]. Well, what happened? Was there an auction? Speak, tell me!

LOPAKHIN [*embarrassed, fearing to betray his joy*]. The auction was over by four o'clock. ... We missed our train and had to wait until half-past nine. [*With a deep sigh.*] Ugh! My head's going round. ...

[*Enter* GAYEV; *he carries some parcels in his right hand and wipes away his tears with his left.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Lionia, what happened? Well, Lionia? [*Impatiently, with tears.*] Tell me quickly, for God's sake! ...

GAYEV [*does not reply, but waves his hand at her. To* FEERS, *weeping*]. Here, take this ... it's some anchovies and

Kerch herrings. ... I've had nothing to eat all day. ... What I've been through!

[Through the open door leading to the billiard room comes the sound of billard balls in play and YASHA'S *voice saying: 'Seven and eighteen'.* GAYEV'S *expression changes and he stops crying.]*

I'm dreadfully tired. Come, Feers, I want to change. *[Goes out through the ballroom,* FEERS *following.]*

PISHCHIK. What happened at the auction? Come, do tell us!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Has the cherry orchard been sold?

LOPAKHIN. It has.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Who bought it?

LOPAKHIN. I did.

[A pause.]

*[*LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA *is overcome; only the fact that she is standing beside a table and a chair prevents her from falling.* VARIA *takes a bundle of keys off her belt, throws them on the floor in the middle of the drawing-room and walks out.]*

Yes, I bought it. Wait a moment, ladies and gentlemen, do, please. I don't feel quite clear in my head, I hardly know how to talk. ... *[Laughs.]* When we got to the auction, Deriganov was there already. Of course, Leonid Andryeevich only had fifteen thousand roubles, and Deriganov at once bid thirty over and above the mortgage. I could see how things were going, so I muscled in and offered forty. He bid forty-five, I bid fifty-five; he kept on adding five thousand each time and I added ten thousand each time. Well, it finished at last – I bid ninety thousand over and above the mortgage, and I got the property. Yes, the cherry orchard's mine now! Mine! *[Laughs.]* My God! the cherry orchard's mine! Come on, tell me I'm drunk, tell me I'm out of my mind, say I've imagined all this. ... *[Stamps his foot.]* Don't laugh at me! If only my father and grandfather could rise from their graves and see everything that's happened ... how their Yermolai, their

much-beaten, half-literate Yermolai, the lad that used to run about with bare feet in the winter ... how he's bought this estate, the most beautiful place on God's earth! Yes, I've bought the very estate where my father and grandfather were serfs, where they weren't even admitted to the kitchen! I must be asleep, I must be dreaming, I only think it's true ... it's all just my imagination, my imagination's been wandering. ... [*Picks up the keys, smiling tenderly.*] She threw these down because she wanted to show she's not mistress here any more. [*Jingles the keys.*] Well, never mind. [*The band is heard tuning up.*] Hi! you musicians, come on now, play something, I want some music! Now then, all of you, just you wait and see Yermolai Lopakhin take an axe to the cherry orchard, just you see the trees come crashing down! We're going to build a whole lot of new villas, and our children and great-grandchildren are going to see a new living world growing up here. ... Come on there, let's have some music!

[*The band plays.* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA *has sunk into a chair and is crying bitterly.*]

[*Reproachfully.*] Why didn't you listen to me before, why didn't you? My poor, dear lady, you can't undo it now. [*With great emotion.*] Oh, if only we could be done with all this, if only we could alter this distorted unhappy life somehow!

PISHCHIK [*taking his arm, in a subdued voice*]. She's crying. Come into the ballroom, leave her alone. ... Come along. ... [*Takes his arm and leads him away to the ballroom.*]

LOPAKHIN. Never mind! Come on, band, play up, play up! Everything must be just as *I* wish it now. [*Ironically.*] Here comes the new landowner, here comes the owner of the cherry orchard! [*He pushes a small table accidentally and nearly knocks over some candle-sticks.*] Never mind, I can pay for everything! [*Goes out with* PISHCHIK.]

[*No one remains in the ballroom or drawing-room save* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA, *who sits hunched up in a chair, crying bitterly. The band continues playing quietly.* ANIA *and* TROFIMOV *enter quickly;* ANIA *goes up to her mother and kneels beside her,* TROFIMOV *remains standing by the entrance to the ballroom.*]

ANIA. Mamma! ... Mamma, you're crying? Dear, kind, sweet Mamma, my darling precious, how I love you! God bless you, Mamma! The cherry orchard's sold, it's quite true, there isn't any cherry orchard any more, it's true ... but don't cry, Mamma, you still have your life ahead of you, you still have your dear, innocent heart. You must come away with me, darling, we must get away from here! We'll plant a new orchard, even more splendid than this one – and when you see it, you'll understand everything, your heart will be filled with happiness, like the sun in the evening; and then you'll smile again, Mamma! Come with me, darling, do come! ...

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

[*The same setting as for Act I. There are no pictures on the walls or curtains at the windows; only a few remaining pieces of furniture are piled up in a corner, as if for sale. There is an oppressive sense of emptiness. At the back of the stage, beside the door, suitcases and other pieces of luggage have been piled together as if ready for a journey. The voices of* VARIA *and* ANIA *can be heard through the door on the left, which is open.* LOPAKHIN *stands waiting;* YASHA *is holding a tray laden with glasses of champagne. In the hall* YEPIHODOV *is tying up a large box. From somewhere behind the scenes comes the low hum of voices: the peasants have called to say good-bye.* GAYEV'S *voice is heard; saying: 'Thank you, friends, thank you.'*]

YASHA. The villagers have come to say good-bye. In my view, Yermolai Aleksyeevich, they're kind-hearted folk, but they haven't much understanding.

[*The hum subsides.* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA *and* GAYEV *enter from the hall;* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA *is not crying but her face is pale and tremulous. She seems unable to speak.*]

GAYEV. You gave them your purse, Liuba. You shouldn't have done that. You really shouldn't.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. I couldn't help myself, I couldn't help myself!

[*Both go out.*]

LOPAKHIN [*calls after them through the door*]. Have some champagne, please do, please! Just one little glass before you go. I didn't think of bringing any from town, and I could only get one bottle at the station. Do have some, please. [*A pause.*] Won't you have any, ladies and gentlemen? [*Walks away from the door.*] If I'd known, I wouldn't have brought any. ... Then I won't have any either.

[YASHA *carefully puts the tray on a chair.*]

You have a drink, Yasha, if nobody else will.

YASHA. Here's to the travellers! And here's to you staying behind. [*Drinks.*] This champagne isn't the real thing, I can tell you.

LOPAKHIN. Eight roubles a bottle. [*A pause.*] It's devilishly cold here.

YASHA. The stoves weren't lit today. It doesn't matter as we're going. [*Laughs.*]

LOPAKHIN. Why are you laughing?

YASHA. Because I'm feeling glad.

LOPAKHIN. October's here, but it's still sunny and calm, as if it were summer. Good building weather. [*Looks at his watch, then at the door.*] Ladies and gentlemen, don't forget there are only forty-six minutes before the train's due to leave. That means we must start in twenty minutes. Hurry up.

[TROFIMOV, *wearing an overcoat, comes in from outdoors.*]

TROFIMOV. I think it's time to start. The horses are at the door. God knows where my goloshes are, they've disappeared. [*Calls through the door.*] Ania, my goloshes aren't here; I can't find them.

LOPAKHIN. And I must be off to Kharkov. I'll travel with you on the same train. I shall stay the whole winter in Kharkov: I've hung around here too long, and it's torture having no work to do. I can't be without work: I just don't know what to do with my hands; they feel limp and strange, as if they didn't belong to me.

TROFIMOV. We'll soon be gone, then you can start your useful labours again.

LOPAKHIN. Have a little drink, do.

TROFIMOV. No, thanks.

LOPAKHIN. You're going to Moscow, then?

TROFIMOV. Yes, I'll see them off to town, and then, tomorrow I'm off to Moscow.

LOPAKHIN. Well, well. ... I expect the professors are holding up their lectures, waiting for your arrival!

TROFIMOV. That's none of your business.

LOPAKHIN. How many years have you been studying at the university?

TROFIMOV. I wish you'd think up something new, that's old and stale. [*Looks for his goloshes.*] Incidentally, as we're not likely to meet again, I'd like to give you a bit of advice, by way of a farewell: stop throwing your arms about! Try to get rid of that habit of making wide, sweeping gestures. Yes, and all this talk, too, about building villas, these calculations about summer residents that are going to turn into smallholders, these forecasts – they're all sweeping gestures, too.... When all's said and done, I like you, despite everything. You've slender, delicate fingers, like an artist's, you've a fine, sensitive soul....

LOPAKHIN [*embraces him*]. Good-bye, my friend. Thank you for everything. I can let you have some money for your journey, if you need it.

TROFIMOV. Whatever for? I don't want it.

LOPAKHIN. But you haven't any!

TROFIMOV. Yes, I have, thank you. I've just had some for a translation. Here it is, in my pocket. [*Anxiously.*] But I can't see my goloshes anywhere.

VARIA [*from the other room*]. Take your beastly things! [*She throws a pair of rubber goloshes into the room.*]

TROFIMOV. But why are you angry, Varia? Hm ... but these aren't my goloshes!

LOPAKHIN. I had a thousand acres of poppy sown last spring, and now I've just made forty thousand net profit on it. And when they were in bloom, what a picture it was! What I want to say is that I've made the forty thousand, and now I'm offering to lend you money because I'm in a position to do it. Why are you so stuck up? I'm a peasant... I've no manners.

TROFIMOV. Your father was a peasant, mine had a chemist's shop. But there's nothing in that.

[LOPAKHIN *takes out his wallet.*]

Leave it alone, leave it alone. ... Even if you offered me two hundred thousand, I wouldn't take it. I'm a free man. And all that you value so highly and hold so dear, you rich men – and beggars, too, for that matter – none of it has the slightest power over me – it's all just so much fluff blowing about in the air. I'm strong, I'm proud, I can do without you, I can pass you by. Humanity is advancing towards the highest truth, the greatest happiness that it is possible to achieve on earth, and I am in the van!

LOPAKHIN. Will you get there?

TROFIMOV. Yes. [*A pause.*] I'll get there myself, or show others the way to get there.

[*The sound of an axe striking a tree is heard in the distance.*]

LOPAKHIN. Well, good-bye, my friend, it's time to go. We show off in front of one another, and in the meantime life is slipping by. When I work for long hours on end, without taking any time off, I feel happier in my mind and I even imagine I know why I exist. But how many people there are in Russia, my friend, who exist to no purpose whatever! Well, never mind, perhaps it's no matter. They say, Leonid Andryeevich has taken a post at the bank, at six thousand a year. I don't expect he'll stick to it: he's too lazy. ...

ANIA [*in the doorway*]. Mamma asks you not to cut the orchard down until she's left.

TROFIMOV. I should say not! Haven't you got any tact? [*Goes out through the hall.*]

LOPAKHIN. All right, all right. ... These people! [*Follows* TROFIMOV.]

ANIA. Has Feers been taken to hospital?

YASHA. I told them to take him this morning. He's gone, I think.

ANIA [*to* YEPIHODOV, *who passes through the ballroom*]. Semion Pantelyeevich, will you please find out whether Feers has been taken to hospital?

YASHA [*offended*]. I told Yegor this morning. Need you ask ten times?

YEPIHODOV. This superannuated Feers – candidly speaking, I mean – he's beyond repair, he ought to go and join his ancestors. As for me, I can only envy him. [*He places a suitcase on top of a cardboard hat-box and squashes it.*] There you are, you see! ... I might have known it! [*Goes out.*]

YASHA [*sardonically*]. Two-and-twenty misfortunes!

VARIA [*from behind the door*]. Has Feers been taken to the hospital?

ANIA. Yes.

VARIA. Why haven't they taken the letter to the doctor, then?

ANIA. I'll send someone after them with it. ... [*Goes out.*]

VARIA [*from adjoining room*]. Where's Yasha? Tell him, his mother is here and wants to say good-bye to him.

YASHA [*waves his hand*]. She makes me lose patience with her.

[*While the foregoing action has been taking place,* DOONIASHA *has been fussing with the luggage; now that* YASHA *is alone, she comes up to him.*]

DOONIASHA. If only you'd look at me once, Yasha! You're going ... you're leaving me behind! ... [*She cries and throws her arms round his neck.*]

YASHA. What's the point of crying? [*Drinks champagne.*] In a week's time I'll be in Paris again. Tomorrow we'll get into an express train – and off we'll go – we shall just disappear! I can hardly believe it. Vive la France! This place doesn't suit me, I can't live here – there's nothing going on. I've seen enough of all this ignorance. I've had enough of it. [*Drinks.*] What are you crying for? Behave like a respectable girl, then there won't be any need to cry.

DOONIASHA [*looking into a hand-mirror and powdering her nose*]. Write to me from Paris, won't you? You know that I've loved you, Yasha. I've loved you so much! I've got a soft heart, Yasha!

YASHA. Someone's coming. [*Pretends to be busy with a suitcase, singing quietly to himself.*]

[*Enter* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA, GAYEV, ANIA *and* CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA.]

GAYEV. We ought to be going. There isn't much time left. [*Looks at* YASHA.] Who's smelling of herring here?

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. In ten minutes we ought to be getting into the carriage. ... [*Glances round the room.*] Good-bye, dear house, old grandfather house. Winter will pass, spring will come again, and then you won't be here any more, you'll be pulled down. How much these walls have seen! [*Kisses her daughter ardently.*] My little treasure, you look simply radiant, your eyes are shining like diamonds. Are you glad? Very glad?

ANIA. Yes, very. Our new life is just beginning, Mamma!

GAYEV [*brightly*]. So it is indeed, everything's all right now. Before the cherry orchard was sold everybody was worried and upset, but as soon as it was all settled finally and once for all, everybody calmed down, and felt quite cheerful, in fact. ... I'm an employee of a bank now, a financier. ... I pot the red ... and you, Liuba, you're looking better, too, when all's said and done. There's no doubt about it.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Yes, my nerves are better, it's true.

[*Someone helps her on with her hat and coat.*]

I'm sleeping better, too. Take my things out, Yasha, it's time. [*To* ANIA.] My little girl, we'll soon be seeing each other again. I'm going to Paris – I shall live there on the money which your Grandmamma in Yaroslavl sent us to buy the estate – God bless Grandmamma! – and that money won't last long either.

ANIA. You'll come back soon, Mamma ... quite soon, won't you? I shall study and pass my exams at the high school and then I'll work and help you. We'll read all sorts of books together, Mamma ... won't we? [*She kisses her mother's hands.*] We'll read during the long autumn evenings, we'll read lots of books, and a new, wonderful world will open up before us. ... [*Dreamily.*] Mamma, come back. ...

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. I'll come back, my precious. [*Embraces her.*]

[*Enter* LOPAKHIN. CHARLOTTA *quietly sings to herself.*]

GAYEV. Happy Charlotta! She's singing.

CHARLOTTA [*picks up a bundle that looks like a baby in swaddling clothes.*] Bye-bye, little baby. [*A sound like a baby crying is heard.*] Be quiet, my sweet, be a good little boy. [*The 'crying' continues.*] My heart goes out to you, baby! [*Throws the bundle down.*] Are you going to find me another job, please? I can't do without one.

LOPAKHIN. We'll find you one, Charlotta Ivanovna, don't worry.

GAYEV. Everybody's leaving us, Varia's going away ... we've suddenly become unwanted.

CHARLOTTA. I haven't got anywhere to live in town. I shall have to go. [*Hums.*] Oh, well, never mind.

[*Enter* PISHCHIK.]

LOPAKHIN. What a phenomenon!

PISHCHIK [*out of breath*]. Och, let me get my breath. ... I'm worn out. ... My good friends. ... Give me some water. ...

GAYEV. I suppose you've come to borrow money? I'd better go. ... Excuse me. ... [*Goes out.*]

PISHCHIK. I've not been to see you for a long time ... my beautiful lady. ... [*To* LOPAKHIN.] So you're here ... I'm glad to see you ... you're a man of great intelligence ... here ... take this. ... [*Hands money to* LOPAKHIN.] Four

hundred roubles. ... I still owe you eight hundred and forty. ...

LOPAKHIN [*shrugs his shoulders, bewildered*]. It's like a dream. ... Where did you get it from?

PISHCHIK. Wait a moment. ... I'm so hot. ... A most extraordinary thing happened. Some English people came to see me and discovered a sort of white clay on my land. ... [*To* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA.] Here's four hundred for you also, my dear ... enchantress. ... [*Hands her the money.*] You'll get the rest later on. [*Takes a drink of water.*] Just now a young fellow in the train was telling me that some great philosopher or other ... advises people to jump off roofs. You just jump off, he says, and that settles the whole problem. [*As though astonished at what he has just said.*] Fancy that! More water, please.

LOPAKHIN. Who were these Englishmen?

PISHCHIK. I let the land with the clay to them for twenty-four years. ... And now you must excuse me, I'm in a hurry. I've got to get along as quickly as I can. I'm going to Znoikov's, then to Kardamonov's. ... I owe money to all of them. [*Drinks.*] Good health to you all. I'll call again on Thursday. ...

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. We're just on the point of moving to town, and tomorrow I'm going abroad.

PISHCHIK. What's that? [*In agitation.*] What are you going to town for? I see now ... this furniture and the suit-cases. ... Well, never mind. [*Tearfully.*] Never mind. ... These Englishmen, you know, they're men of the greatest intelligence. ... Never mind. ... I wish you every happiness, God be with you. Never mind, everything comes to an end eventually. [*Kisses* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA'S *hand.*] And when you hear that my end has come, just think of – a horse, and say: 'There used to be a fellow like that once ... Simeonov-Pishchik his name was – God be with him!' Wonderful weather we're having. Yes. ...

[*Goes out, overcome with embarrassment, but returns at once and stands in the doorway.*] Dashenka sent greetings to you. [*Goes out.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Well, we can go now. I'm leaving with two worries on my mind. One is Feers – he's sick, you know. [*Glances at her watch.*] We have another five minutes or so. . . .

ANIA. Mamma, Feers has been taken to hospital already. Yasha sent him this morning.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. The other is Varia. She's been accustomed to getting up early and working, and now, without work, she's like a fish out of water. She's got so thin and pale, and she cries a lot, poor thing. [*A pause.*] You know very well, Yermolai Aleksyeevich, that I'd been hoping to get her married to you . . . and everything seemed to show that you meant to marry her, too. [*Whispers to* ANIA, *who nods to* CHARLOTTA, *and they both go out.*] She loves you, and you must be fond of her, too . . . and I just don't know, I just don't know why you seem to keep away from each other. I don't understand it.

LOPAKHIN. Neither do I myself, I must confess. It's all so strange somehow. . . . If there's still time, I'm ready even now. . . . Let's settle it at once – and get it over! Without you here, I don't feel I shall ever propose to her.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. That's an excellent idea! You'll hardly need more than a minute, that's all. I'll call her at once.

LOPAKHIN. There's champagne here, too, quite suitable for the occasion. [*Takes a look at the glasses.*] But they're empty, someone's drunk it up. [YASHA *coughs.*] I should have said lapped it up.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*with animation*]. I'm so glad. We'll go outside. Yasha, allez! I'll call her. . . . [*Through the door.*] Varia, come here a moment, leave what you're doing for a minute! Varia! [*Goes out with* YASHA.]

LOPAKHIN [*glancing at his watch*]. Yes. ... [*A pause.*]

[*Suppressed laughter and whispering is heard from behind the door, and finally* VARIA *comes in and starts examining the luggage. After some time she says:*]

VARIA. It's strange, I just can't find ...

LOPAKHIN. What are you looking for?

VARIA. I packed the things myself, yet I can't remember. ... [*A pause.*]

LOPAKHIN. Where are you going to now, Varvara Mihailovna?

VARIA. I? To the Rogulins. I've agreed to look after the house for them ... to be their housekeeper, or something.

LOPAKHIN. That's at Yashnevo, isn't it? About seventy miles from here. [*A pause.*] So this is the end of life in this house. ...

VARIA [*examining the luggage*]. But where could it be? Or perhaps I've packed it in the trunk? ... Yes, life in this house has come to an end ... there won't be any more. ...

LOPAKHIN. And I'm going to Kharkov presently. ... On the next train. I've got a lot to do there. And I'm leaving Yepihodov here. ... I've engaged him.

VARIA. Well! ...

LOPAKHIN. Do you remember, last year about this time it was snowing already, but now it's quite still and sunny. It's rather cold, though. ... About three degrees of frost.

VARIA. I haven't looked. [*A pause.*] Besides, our thermometer's broken. ... [*A pause.*]

[*A voice is heard from outside the door: 'Yermolai Aleksyeevich!'*]

LOPAKHIN [*as if he had long been expecting it*]. Coming this moment! [*Goes out quickly.*]

[VARIA, *sitting on the floor, with her head on the bundle of clothes, sobs softly. The door opens,* LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA *enters quietly.*]

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Well? [*A pause.*] We must go.

VARIA [*stops crying and wipes her eyes*]. Yes, it's time,

Mamma dear. I'll just be able to get to the Rogulins today, if only we don't miss the train.

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA [*calls through the door*]. Ania, put your coat on.

[*Enter* ANIA, *followed by* GAYEV *and* CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA. GAYEV *wears a heavy overcoat with a hood. Servants and coachmen come into the room.* YEPIHODOV *fusses with the luggage.*]

Now we can start on our journey!

ANIA [*joyfully*]. Yes, our journey!

GAYEV. My friends, my dear, kind friends! Now as I leave this house for ever, how can I remain silent, how can I refrain from expressing to you, as a last farewell, the feelings which now overwhelm me. . . .

ANIA [*imploringly*]. Uncle!

VARIA. Uncle, dear, please don't!

GAYEV [*downcast*]. I pot the red and follow through. . . . I'll keep quiet.

[*Enter* TROFIMOV, *then* LOPAKHIN.]

TROFIMOV. Well, ladies and gentlemen, it's time to go.

LOPAKHIN. Yepihodov, my coat!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. I'll just sit down for one little minute more. I feel as if I'd never seen the walls and ceilings of this house before, and now I look at them with such longing and affection. . . .

GAYEV. I remember when I was six years old – it was Holy Trinity day – I was sitting on this window-still, looking at Father – he was just going to church. . . .

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Have they taken out all the luggage?

LOPAKHIN. It looks as if they have. [*To* YEPIHODOV, *as he puts on his coat.*] See that everything's all right, Yepihodov.

YEPIHODOV [*in a husky voice*]. Don't worry, Yermolai Aleksyeevich!

LOPAKHIN. What are you talking like that for?

YEPIHODOV. I've just had a drink of water, I must have swallowed something.

YASHA [*with contempt*]. What ignorance!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. When we leave here there won't be a soul in the place. . . .

LOPAKHIN. Until the spring.

VARIA [*pulls an umbrella from a bundle of clothes;* LOPAKHIN *pretends to be frightened that she is going to strike him*]. Now, why . . . why are you doing that? . . . I never thought of . . .

TROFIMOV. Ladies and gentlemen, come, let's get into the carriage. It's high time. The train will be in soon.

VARIA. Pyetia, here they are, your goloshes, beside the suitcase. [*Tearfully.*] And how dirty and worn-out they are! . . .

TROFIMOV [*puts them on*]. Come along, ladies and gentlemen!

GAYEV [*greatly embarrassed, afraid of breaking into tears*]. The train, the station. . . . In off into the middle pocket. . . .

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Let us go!

LOPAKHIN. Is everyone here? No one left behind? [*Locks the door on the left.*] There are some things put away there, it had better be locked up. Come along!

ANIA. Good-bye, old house! Good-bye, old life!

TROFIMOV. Greetings to the new life! . . . [*Goes out with* ANIA.]

[VARIA *glances round the room and goes out slowly.* YASHA *and* CHARLOTTA, *with her little dog, follow.*]

LOPAKHIN. And so, until the spring. Come along, ladies and gentlemen. . . . Au revoir! [*Goes out.*]

[LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA *and* GAYEV *are left alone. They seem to have been waiting for this moment, and now they embrace each other and sob quietly, with restraint, so as not to be heard.*]

GAYEV [*with despair in his voice*]. Sister, my sister. . . .

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. Oh my darling, my precious, my

beautiful orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness ... good-bye! ... Good-bye!

ANIA'S VOICE [*gaily*]. Mamma! ...

TROFIMOV'S VOICE [*gaily and excitedly*]. Ah-oo! ...

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. For the last time – to look at these walls, these windows. ... Mother used to love walking up and down this room. ...

GAYEV. Sister, my sister! ...

ANIA'S VOICE. Mamma!

TROFIMOV'S VOICE. Ah-oo!

LIUBOV ANDRYEEVNA. We're coming. ... [*Both go out.*]

[*The stage is empty. The sound of doors being locked is heard, then of carriages driving off. It grows quiet. The stillness is broken by the dull thuds of an axe on a tree. They sound forlorn and sad.*

There is a sound of footsteps and from the door on the right FEERS *appears. He is dressed, as usual, in a coat and white waistcoat, and is wearing slippers. He looks ill.*]

FEERS [*walks up to the middle door and tries the handle*]. Locked. They've gone. ... [*Sits down on a sofa.*] They forgot about me. Never mind. ... I'll sit here for a bit, I don't suppose Leonid Andryeevich put on his fur coat, I expect he's gone in his light one. ... [*Sighs, preoccupied.*] I didn't see to it. ... These youngsters! ... [*Mutters something unintelligible.*] My life's gone as if I'd never lived. ... [*Lies down.*] I'll lie down a bit. You haven't got any strength left, nothing's left, nothing. ... Oh, you ... you're daft! ... [*Lies motionless.*]

[*A distant sound is heard, coming as if out of the sky, like the sound of a string snapping, slowly and sadly dying away. Silence ensures, broken only by the sound of an axe striking a tree in the orchard far away.*]

CURTAIN

CHEKHOV'S LIFE

1860 Chekov was born the son of a gocer and grandson of a serf, in Taganrog, a small port on the Sea of Asov, where he spent his first nineteen years, and which he described on a return visit in later life.

1875 His father, bankrupt, flees from Taganrog concealed beneath a mat at the bottom of a cart.

1876 A former lodger buys Chekhov's house and puts the rest of the family out.

1879 Chekhov rejoins his family, who have followed his father to Moscow, and enrols at the university to study medicine.

1880 Begins contributing humorous material to minor magazines under the pen-name Antosha Chekhonte.

1882 Begins contributing regularly to the St. Petersburg humorous journal **Oskolki** - short stories and sketches, and a columun on Moscow life.

1884 Qualifies as a doctor, and begins practising in

Moscow — the start of a sporadic second career which over the years brings him much hard work but little income.

1885 Begins writing for the St. Petersburg Gazette, which gives him the opportunity to break out of the tight restrictions on length and the rigidity humerous format in which he has worked up to now.

1886 Another step up the journalistic ladder — he begins writing, under his own name and for good money, for Novoye vremya.

1887 In a literary success in St. Petersburg writes Ivanov as a result of a commission from a producer who wants a light entertainment in the Chekhovian style. The play is produced in Moscow (his first production) to a mixture of clapping and hissing.

1888 Begins to publish his stories in the "thick journals"; has survived his career in comic journalism to emerge as a serious and respectable writer. But at the same time begins writing four one-act farces for the theatre.

1889 **The Wood Demon** (which Chekov later uses as raw material for **Uncle Vania**) opens at a second-rate Moscow theatre, and runs for only three performances.

1890 Makes the appalling journey across Siberia (largely in unsprung carts over unsurfaced roads) to visit and report on the penal colony on the island of Sakhalin. Sets out to interview the entire population of prisoners and exiles, at the rate of 160 a day.

1892 Travels the back country of Nizhny Novgorod and Voronyezh provinces in the middle of winter, trying to prevent recurrence of the previous year's famine among the peasants. Is banqueted by the provincial governors. Moves to the modest but comfortable estate he has bought himself at Melikhovo, fifty miles south of Moscow. Becomes an energetic and enlightened landowner, cultivating the soil and doctoring the peasants. So ends three months organising the district against an expected cholera epidemic.

1894 Starts work on the first of the three schools he builds in the Melikhovo district.

1896 **The Seagull** opens in St. Petersburg, and survives only five performances after a disastrous first night. Chekhov decides not to have another play put on even if he lives another seven hundred years.

1897 Suffers a violent lung haemorrhage while dining with his friends, and is forced to recognize at last when he has long closed his eyes to — that he is suffering from advanced consumption.

1898 **The Seagull** is revived by Stanislavsky at the Moscow Art Theatre, and is an immediate success.

1899 **Uncle Vanya** is produced successfully by the Moscow Art Theatre.

1901 **Three Sisters** produced by the Moscow Art Theatre, but rather poorly received.

1901 Chekhov marries Olga Knipper, an actress in the Moscow Art company who is to create the part of Ranyevskaya.

1904 **The Cherry Orchard** is produced in January, and in July, after two heart attacks, Chekhov dies in a hotel bedroom in the German area of Badenweiler.